The Individualized Worker

William James Atkinson

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Department of Sociology, October 2008.

Word count: eighty-four thousand, nine-hundred and forty-six

Abstract

Toward the end of the millennium social class became subject to increasingly sustained and forceful claims that it had been wiped from the social landscape. Within this outpouring of anti-class sentiment, however, three writers highlighting similar processes spelling the end of class have been particularly influential yet, surprisingly, only cursorily or inadequately examined by faithful defenders of the much-maligned concept hitherto. These are Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman, all of whom argue class to have been eroded from social life on the basis of an *individualization* and increased *reflexivity* of identities, lifestyles and life paths in the contemporary epoch. This thesis, then, aims to fill the void left by class analysts by subjecting these theories to detailed theoretical and empirical scrutiny in the same spirit as the *Affluent Worker* team confronting embourgeoisement forty years earlier. It proceeds first of all by interrogating the internal contradictions and theoretical weaknesses of each theory of individualization and reflexivity before moving on to outline, defend and, where necessary, critique and extend the Bourdieusian position on class guiding the study. The latter then, importantly, serves as a platform from which to launch not only a fresh round of critique but also a *reformulation* of individualization and reflexivity in a new conceptual vocabulary so that they can be put to consistent empirical test. The theoretical part of the thesis complete, the empirical component then consists of qualitative interviews with twenty-six individuals drawn from across the socio-economic spectrum. The overall conclusion is that, contrary to what the individualization theorists hold, class clearly continues to exert its influence over identities, life courses and lifestyle pursuits in the way a Bourdieusian might expect, but that this is specified by a new social context not dissimilar to that described by Beck and the others.

Acknowledgements

First thanks are due to all those who took part in the research. After them, Lydia Hayes and Ashley Cooper are in line for acknowledgment, even though their efforts were in vain, as are Stuart Davies, Laura Merlino and gatekeepers who must remain anonymous in order to retain confidentiality. More generally, many thanks for their advice, comments, discussions and/or assistance at various points are owed to Claire Blencowe, Harriet Bradley, Annie Bramley, Lynne Copson, Esther Dermott, Jackie Friel, Jo Haynes, Viv Jackson, Noreen Kelly, Ruth Levitas and Maggie Studholme. Wendy Bottero and numerous anonymous referees and conference audiences also deserve thanks for fruitful exchanges that sharpened up some of my views.

My gratitude is, of course, with my supervisors, Gregor McLennan and Paula Surridge, for their input and support. Gregor in particular has been an unfailing source of guidance, encouragement and friendly criticism throughout and for that I am immensely grateful. My greatest thanks, however, go to Vikki for all her practical advice and suggestions, for letting me exploit her office resources, for acting as a chauffeur, for putting up with many moans and rants, but also, obviously, for so much more.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my brother, Tant.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this dissertation is original unless otherwise indicated by special reference in the text and that no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree. The views expressed within are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

Signed: L. Atkinson Date: 3/11/09

CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES AND TABLES

1. Introduction: From Affluence to Individualization

Forty years ago, the spectre of embourgeoisement haunted the sociology of class. Ever-increasing societal affluence, relative parity of incomes and living conditions and the expanded availability of consumer goods had all, so proponents of the famous thesis asserted (e.g. Zweig, 1961), ensured the cultural and political assimilation of the working class into the middle rungs of society and, as a consequence, effectively rendered the concept of class redundant. Lifestyles and social values had converged, the argument went, with the erstwhile working class eagerly appropriating the tastes and leisure pursuits of the growing middle class, unapologetically jettisoning their once unbreakable commitment to collectivism and trade unionism in favour of bourgeois privatism, individualism and status-obsession and turning to Conservatism in the political arena as the only force capable of ensuring the maintenance of their new-found principles. In sum, no distinguishable difference warranting sociological attention existed between occupational groups, it was claimed, and despite its scant empirical backing this idea soon accrued considerable popular purchase.

Enter John Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer and Jennifer Platt, probably the most celebrated research team in the history of British sociology. Having promptly taken to task representatives of the embourgeoisement thesis for their conceptual inadequacies and attempted to reformulate their propositions as sound hypotheses (Goldthorpe and Lockwood, 1964), Goldthorpe *et al.* produced three slim volumes of empirical research that systematically demolished their claims (Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1968a, 1968b, 1969). Interviewing 229 manual workers in three separate industrial plants in Luton, the *Affluent Worker* team, as they came to be known, concluded that there had indeed been profound changes in the working class in the post-war period, but that they could hardly be characterised as embourgeoisement. Instead, whilst they did identify a degree of 'normative convergence' between sections of the working class and white-collar workers, they heralded the emergence of a new, privatised working class characterised by an instrumental approach to work, a 'family centredness' and a pecuniary image of

societal stratification (see also Lockwood, 1966). They may have been transformed, but distinct class divisions and experiences remained.

Four decades on, however, the social world has changed, and whilst the vanquished apparition of embourgeoisement may have been buried in the sands of time, once again the concept of class is under threat. Though the current epoch is not short of perspectives critical of the veteran sociological tool, a new challenge has emerged on the horizon – one with consequences just as stark as embourgeoisement but anchored in the global socio-political climate of the last quarter century, one that has theorised recent transformations in the social landscape without capitulating to the excesses of postmodern proclamations, and one that commands wide influence and discussion within the academy whilst also existing in simplified form in the political arena. This challenge is the theory of *individualization*, advanced in slightly different versions by German sociologist Ulrich Beck and Polish émigré Zygmunt Bauman, and the kindred ideas on increasing reflexivity forwarded by British social theorist and now New Labour Lord Anthony Giddens. All three thinkers, in differing ways and with different degrees of directness, posit the steady erosion of class from objective social structures and subjective consciousness in the wake of a withering of tradition or the onset of disembedding forces prising individuals from their old collective modes of existence and ensuring that they no longer have any choice but to choose how to live, what to value and what to become. To give new meaning to the Sartrian dictum, people are now forced to be free whether they like it or not.

So once more the ability of class to explain patterns of difference and inequality has been put into question, its position in the sociological armoury queried and its utility for understanding the key political issues of our time thrown into doubt. Yet, surprisingly, no substantial appraisal of individualization or Giddens' work on reflexivity as they relate to class has yet been produced. Sure enough those who stay faithful to the concept of class have rebuked them, dismissed them or undertaken partial examinations of them whilst continuing to produce theoretical and empirical contributions to their topic, but no sustained head-on assessment has ever emerged. The result is a perturbing and indefensible void, with scholars content to nibble at its edges rather than rekindle the spirit of the *Affluent Worker* research, step into its epicentre and effectively adjudicate the intellectual wellbeing of class. Thus the present study is conceived. Over the

following pages, the ideas of Beck, Bauman and Giddens will be subject to a direct examination to determine with some degree of certainty whether they have the credibility to match their pervasive influence. Proceeding in a similar fashion to the famous study of embourgeoisement, the two building blocks of scientific knowledge, logic and empirical evidence, are employed to arbitrate the fate of individualization. Thus, to begin with, the assessment will entail a double-pronged *theoretical critique* of the ideas under inspection. On the one hand, there will be an evaluation of the logical consistency of each position abstracted from particular conceptual prejudices – what Giddens (1984) himself, in an earlier incarnation, would call an appraisal of 'internal validity'. On the other hand, the claims of Beck and the others will be exposed to further critique based on the theoretical stance on class employed in this study and, subsequently, some of their core postulations will be reformulated in a more agreeable conceptual idiom. In this latter task, the study is guided by the influential theoretical understanding of class put forward by the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, though in a modified form.

Theoretical criticism is an important task in the quest to advance knowledge, but it is not enough on its own to fully discern the worth of the theories of Beck and the others. Hence, the second aspect of the study is an *empirical assessment* of the themes of individualization and reflexivity, as reformulated accordingly, to see if they can, as Popper (1959/2002: 10 *et passim*) would say, 'prove their mettle'. In this much it is primarily 'deductive' in its approach – it is, in other words, 'testing' a set of hypothesised theoretical themes – though as with any research act of this kind there are always inductive moments too – that is, the formulation of new themes and theoretical propositions out of empirical material. Epistemologically, this enterprise is guided not by positivism, Hempelian hypothetico-deductivism or Popper's critical rationalism – all of which are often construed as firm foundations for deductivist research – but by Bourdieu's post-positivist maxim, inspired by Gaston Bachelard's 'applied rationalism', that the social fact is won (it breaks with lay experience), constructed (it is built into a formalised model) and *confirmed (or, it may be added, confuted) by empirical research* (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron, 1991: 11). Just as in the *Affluent Worker* research, the central method of investigation in the endeavour to confirm or confute individualization will be one-to-one interviews. However, where the Luton team's interviews were almost survey-like in construction, execution and reportage, the interviews here must

explore in considerable depth the life histories and subjectivities of individuals to a degree missed by Goldthorpe *et al.* if it is to produce satisfactory conclusions on the theories under scrutiny (cf. Devine, 1992: 5–6). Partly for that reason, and partly in owing to practical factors such as significant differences in resources and number of researchers (as well as continued difficulties of access), the total number of interviews – twenty-six – is considerably less than the hundreds collected by Goldthorpe and his team, meaning that, at this stage, the research can only claim to be a suggestive starting point upon which future inquiry can be built. Furthermore, because embourgeoisement essentially theorised mutations in the working class alone, Goldthorpe *et al.* understandably conducted their interviews primarily with manual workers. Individualization and reflexivity, however, are argued to have brought changes in life paths, values, perceptions and preferences across the board, and hence the sample here can not be restricted to any one section of society but must reach across the occupational spectrum.

As with the theoretical critique, the empirical component of the study proceeds on two fronts, separating out for analytical purposes elements of the social cosmos that are, in reality, enmeshed. First it will investigate the *structural* dimension of social life, discerning whether the relational constraints or opportunities of class have, as Beck and the others claim, ceased to play a role in the formation of life paths and been supplanted by reflexive decision making or whether their pernicious existence continues to dictate trajectories. Secondly, it will examine whether class has been erased from the *symbolic* realm of lifestyle practices, a theme which Giddens in particular is associated with, and schemes of perception – either as an explicit, meaningful reference point for individuals in describing the world or as an implicit factor undergirding their perception of themselves, their lives, their relation to and judgement of others, political views and so on. If the individualization theorists are correct, then consciousness and discourse will hinge only upon individualistic notions of uniqueness, self-responsibility and self-blame, with class banished from perception altogether or, if anything, recognised as nothing more than a relic from the distant past.

An Overview

The structure of the thesis is bisected according to its twin aims, with the first section laying the theoretical groundwork upon which the second section, the empirical investigation, rests. The next chapter opens the conceptual component by setting the theories of individualization in their historical and intellectual context and assessing the three varieties of critical response they have garnered from class analysts, showing in each case that whilst important points have been ventured, enough has not yet been done to fully confute or confirm the thoughts of Beck and the others as they bear on class. After that, chapter 3 provides the detailed exposition of each position that has been regrettably absent in recent scholarship on class, extracting the core themes and processes of theoretical and empirical significance, before then questioning the logic and cohesion of the three perspectives. The conclusion is, ultimately, that individualization as conceptualised so far is deeply flawed and should not be accepted, yet that many of the broad themes and processes they address may still, when adequately re-thought, have empirical salience and require examination. Chapter 4 therefore attempts to reformulate the ideas of Beck and the others into a more agreeable framework. To do this, it outlines the theoretical position on class – that is, what constitutes the historically troublesome concept – adopted in this thesis. Though wary of intellectual fashions and misapplication, the sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu – grounded in a relational (or 'topological', as Wacquant [2008] recently put it) ontology and consisting of the concepts of social space, fields, capital and habitus – is logically and empirically compelling and forms the baseline of the investigation. This is not to say, however, that it is without its limitations, particularly in adequately grasping the complexities of social life revealed by in-depth qualitative, life-history research. Individual experiential idiosyncrasy and variation, as well as biographical completeness, escape between the gaps of Bourdieu's concepts, whilst conscious cogitation and agency remain inadequately theorised. To plug these niggling cracks, the link between the French thinker's thought and the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz is exploited. To be more precise, Schutz's notion of the *lifeworld*, read in a particular way, and his understanding of the *individual stock of knowledge* are forwarded as useful additions and adjustments to Bourdieu's set of 'thinking tools'. From this position of 'modified' or

'phenomenologised Bourdieusianism' [1] the theory of individualization can be critiqued anew but its plausible aspects preserved as testable propositions.

Chapter 5 concludes the theoretical section of the thesis by detailing the methodological considerations and choices flowing from the specifics of the processes under investigation and the framework advanced in chapter 4, justifying and outlining the powers of qualitative interviewing in this regard. A description of the parameters and acquisition of the sample is also included, along with attendant reflections on the persistent and disquieting difficulties of access experienced. With this task complete, the empirical segment of the thesis, consisting of two complementary chapters, can begin. Chapter 6 traces the objective life paths of the interviewees, examining the extent to which capital and habitus continue to shape trajectories through social space via educational and occupational pathways, even where upwards mobility has occurred. Chapter 7 then explores the subjective salience of class by unpacking the symbolic practices, sense of social difference and use of class discourse amongst the research participants. In both cases, the continued significance of relational class processes – the powers of capital and habitus – is upheld, but not without recognition of real social change. The conclusion then rounds out the study by reiterating the themes revealed within a coherent framework, considering the limitations and future directions of the research and contemplating its consequences for the landscape of social theory and political practice.

---

[1] These are awkward phrases which I nevertheless feel are necessary to distinguish my thought from unadulterated Bourdieusianism and to keep it clear and rigorous – something which can not be said for other users of Bourdieu, such as Skeggs (2004), who seem to almost haphazardly throw in multiple additions or ideas and appear unclear about their foundational vision of social ontology. I refrain from using the rather more arrogant term 'neo-Bourdieusianism', however, for fear of being misread as overly critical of or distant from Bourdieu in a sociological field which is currently witnessing a split in France between faithful Bourdieusians and those, such as Latour, Lahire and Boltanski, who see his work as overly structuralist or determinist and have, to greater and lesser degrees, swung too far in the direction of subjectivism or its ontological bedfellows (see Frère, 2004).

2. Roots and Rejoinders: the Context of Emergence and the Response of Class Analysis

In order to set the scene for the present investigation this chapter will pursue two tasks. To begin with, it will sketch in broad brush strokes the socio-historical and intellectual context within which the ideas of Giddens, Beck and Bauman are rooted. This will entail a clarification of the trajectory of class analysis, the manifold social changes in the last quarter-century or so and the upsurge of anti-class sentiment they have induced. After that, the critical literature pertaining to Giddens and the others will be considered and categorised according to the main lines of attack pursued and the traditions of thought they are primarily aligned with, the principle purpose being to reveal the necessity of intervention by exposing a lack of sustained, comprehensive and adequate appraisal and exploration whilst also acknowledging the worthwhile contributions and advances made by others.

Class Analysis into the Nineties

Initially characterised in the immediate post-war period by the opposition between 'stratification theorists' conceiving inequality to be measurable with a multiplicity of gradational scales (of prestige, income and so on) and conflict theorists positing the existence of determinate social groups engaged in conflict, the field[2] of class analysis had, by the end of the eighties, become dominated by two perspectives which, whilst diverging along one axis of differentiation, nevertheless shared a constellation of methodological and conceptual tenets that set them apart from others. These were, on the one hand, the 'analytical Marxism' of American sociologist Erik Olin Wright (1978, 1979, 1985, 1997) and, on the other, the Weber-inspired Nuffield programme of social mobility research associated above all with John Goldthorpe (1980, 1987, 2000; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992).

---

[2] The term 'field' is used only loosely here and throughout in describing class analysis, rather than in the specific, technical sense given to it by Bourdieu. There is, no doubt, much to suggest that class analysis, or the study of 'class and stratification', should indeed be conceived and analysed as a field in the latter sense, but such an analysis would require more space than is available.

Both owed a great deal of their influence to the fact that they broke with the prevailing approaches to class – theoretical cogitation or historical or qualitative research – and offered for the first time, in different forms, the possibility of conducting large-scale, national and comparative quantitative analysis based on rigorously constructed and theoretically grounded class categories rather than gradational scales operating with a simplistic conception of 'classes' ultimately reducible to the division between manual and non-manual workers.

Wright's perspective emerged out of the confluence of two intentions. The first of these was to surmount the so-called 'embarrassment of the middle classes' then plaguing Marxism (Wright, 1985: 13), that is, the proliferation of the middle sections of the occupational structure, particularly technical, managerial, professional and scientific positions, through the seventies and the contraction of industrial manual labour as a result of automation and the increasing exportation of manufacture to developing countries. Contradicting the broad thrust of Marx's prognosis and prompting some commentators to herald a turning point in the structure of classes in Western society based on the movement from an industrial to a 'post-industrial' service- or knowledge-based economy (Bell, 1973), this compelled Marxists, who had begun to make significant inroads into the academy since the radical sixties, to account for the new positions by mapping their place in relation to the cardinal classes (see e.g. Poulantzas, 1975; Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1979). Wright's response, initially formulated in dialogue with structuralist Marxism and quickly hailed as amongst the most conceptually rigorous of contributions, was to produce a class map incorporating 'contradictory class locations', later revised in light of criticism and operationalization difficulties to differentiate classes on the basis of a variety of assets other than property that individuals may possess (skills and authority) and in regard to which they may be exploited. At the same time, Wright, along with others flying the flag of 'analytical Marxism', was driven by a second desire to overcome the marginalisation of Marxism in the sociological field by asserting it to be an analytically rigorous, non-dogmatic and scientifically credible body of thought capable of being put to fruitful use in empirical research and, as a result, endeavoured to demonstrate the utility of his own framework by undertaking original investigations and pioneering a multinational research project nourishing several prominent monographs in class analysis (e.g. Marshall *et al.*, 1988; see further Wacquant, 1989).

Goldthorpe's position, in contrast, was formed as a part of a wider programme of research on social mobility initiated at Nuffield College in the seventies (see e.g. Halsey *et al.*, 1980). Originally employing Lockwood's (1958) Weber-inspired differentiation of 'market situations' and 'work situations' of occupations (their 'degree of economic security and chances of economic advancement' and their 'location within the systems of authority and control governing the process of production in which they are engaged, and hence in their degree of autonomy in performing their work-tasks and roles' respectively – Goldthorpe, 1980: 40) to define classes, his specific mission was to gather evidence on occupational mobility in Britain with the aim of explicitly and implicitly countering both Marxist prophecies of proletarianisation and the claims of 'liberal class theorists of industrial society' (e.g. Kerr *et al.*, 1962; Blau and Duncan, 1967) that achievement had trumped ascription, equality of opportunity prevailed and, consequently, other forms of stratification come to the fore (see Gallie, 1991; Marshall, 1991; also Goldthorpe, 1988, 1992; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992: chap. 1). In later work, however, Goldthorpe dropped the Lockwood criteria – now grounding his class schema in the relations of employment (employer, self-employed and employed) and, in the case of the employed, the regulation of their employment (i.e. a labour contract or a service relationship) – and downplayed earlier interests in the prospect of class formation, concentrating his attention instead on the Weberian task of demonstrating the efficacy of class categories in unveiling the objective distribution of life chances across numerous domains (see especially Goldthorpe and Marshall, 1992).

The division between the two perspectives, then, followed the fundamental principle of conceptual opposition within class analysis, consolidated through the seventies, between those marching under the banner of Marxism and those taking inspiration from the writings of Weber. Yet Goldthorpe's and Wright's positions had (and have) more crucial features in common than some critical overviews and comparisons suggest and, as a result, between them succeeded in establishing a dominant and, unfortunately, partial and problematic way of viewing and studying class. Both (though Goldthorpe more so), for example, tended to prioritise *empirical research* over theory building, conducting the latter – often in the form of trying to establish the 'correct' boundaries between classes or to explain concrete findings – only to serve the former or when provoked by criticism, and

both pursued exclusively *quantitative analysis* of large-scale datasets employing often complex statistical techniques. These facets, key in securing their influence, are by no means, in themselves, detractions, but their one-sidedness and sometimes extreme manifestation attracted repeated accusations of theoretical attenuation or empiricism (in Goldthorpe's case at least – Pahl, 1993; Morris and Scott, 1996) and, so some claimed, ultimately threatened to isolate class analysis from broader themes in social theory and, indeed, from any sociologist unfamiliar with the arcane language of advanced statistical procedures (Crompton and Scott, 2000; Savage, 2000). Furthermore, both Wright and Goldthorpe focused on the refinement of objective, static class *structures* as matrices of independent variables and the examination of their consequences (for income, mobility and such like) and, in following through on this, both, like their classical progenitors, restricted classes to the *economic* domain by conceiving them as aggregates of occupations differentiated by certain production- or market-based characteristics. The two have therefore not only wrestled repeatedly, and for many unsatisfactorily, with how best to account for those not actually in employment but, coupled with their substantive interests in the numbers in each class position or with the patterning of differential life chances, marginalised issues of history, culture, subjectivity and identity from the conceptualisation of class beyond the study of voting patterns or quantifiable indicators of class identification or consciousness (criticised at length in Marshall, 1988; Wright *et al.*, 1989; Emmison and Western, 1990; Fantasia, 1995). Finally, both, as a complement to their large-scale, quantitative and economistic orientation, coquetted with a *utilitarian* model of human agency. In Wright's (1985) case, sitting uncomfortably with his lapses into determinism or his lip service to the importance of the 'lived experience' of class in other places (see contributions to Wright *et al.*, 1989) and absent in more recent works, this was through an appreciation of Roemer's (1982) Marxist reworking of game theory. For Goldthorpe (1991), who had once vaunted the Parsonsian 'action frame of reference' but left unelaborated his theoretical position on agency for some time, it was a variety of rational action theory he was to develop and defend at greater length in later years.

There were, of course, dissenting voices even at the zenith of Wright and Goldthorpe's hegemony, some of which, whilst still being split by the Marx-Weber fissure, emphasised either theoretical elaboration (e.g. Parkin, 1979; Murphy, 1988)

or historical, qualitative and culture-laden approaches to class and human agency (e.g. Burawoy, 1979; Clarke *et al.*, 1979; see Fantasia, 1995) and some of which, whilst close to Wright and Goldthorpe in many ways, attempted to subvert the dualistic division between forefathers by appealing to more marginal traditions of thought (such as faithful advocates of stratification theory or the Cambridge school, whose 'interaction distance' or 'differential association' approach, identifying strata on the basis of the frequency of interaction between individuals within occupational groups, drew from the 'social distance' method associated with Laumann, himself tied to the Warner school, and Bogardus; see Stewart *et al.*, 1980; Bottero and Prandy, 2003). Nonetheless, *vis-à-vis* the quantitative, economistic and utilitarian positions of the 'multivariate Marxist' and the Nuffield don, against whose methodological and meta-theoretical assumptions they struggled (see e.g. the debate between Wright and Burawoy in, tellingly, the collection devoted to one of Wright's books – Wright *et al.*, 1989; see also Fantasia, 1995), all of these occupied subordinate locations (manifest in numbers of advocates, levels of critical discussion of their ideas, citations, space in textbooks and such like).

Changes and Challenges at a Century's End

Such was the state of class analysis by the mid-nineties. However, whilst Wright's and Goldthorpe's programmes were progressing and the field rigidifying around their partial opposition, the same period was marked by an abundance of intertwined social processes in Western societies that prompted a tide of declarations that class was an irrelevant and anachronistic item in the sociological toolbox. Such claims are, of course, by no means peculiar to this epoch. Indeed, every decade of the post-war era seems to have had its own collection of challengers. In the forties and fifties it was proponents of stratification theory controversially asserting that America was a 'classless society' on the premise that not only was the distribution of status, prestige, income and so on just too continuous to identify clear-cut boundaries or social groupings but an individual could occupy starkly contrasting positions in each of the different hierarchies (Lenski, 1952; Nisbet, 1959). In the sixties it was either the 'liberal class theorists' forever targeted by Goldthorpe (which overlapped with the 'academic sociology' identified by Giddens, 1981: 269ff, 295; cf. 1982: 56–7), the ascendant New Left

(e.g. Marcuse, 1964) or – most famously – the theorists of embourgeoisement encountered in the Introduction. In the seventies, finally, once the preceding challenges had waned in influence, it was the post-industrial challenge that once again threw into question the sociological and political purchase of the much-maligned concept. Nevertheless, the claims accompanying the social changes of the last twenty-five years that supply the intellectual backcloth and bedfellows of ideas of individualization and reflexivity have been more sustained, multifaceted, forceful and explicit than ever before, often constituting component parts of declarations that a novel period of social history necessitating a clearout of the conceptual cupboards has been set in motion. For the sake of expositional clarity the social processes and their attendant arguments can be categorised into three general realms – the economic, the cultural and the political – and relayed in turn.

Starting first with the economic sphere, the continued shrinkage of the manufacturing and extractive sectors and the concomitant burgeoning of the service sector amid the economic restructuring of the eighties have, some argue, begun to erase from the occupational landscape the archetypal industrial proletariat and replace it with a heterogeneous batch of service workers on the one hand and an un(der)employed and dispossessed mass on the other (Gorz, 1982; Lash and Urry, 1987, 1994; Pahl, 1989; Pakulski and Waters, 1996: 57–8; Gray, 1998). Not only that, numerous commentators claim, but, alongside this post-industrial turn, 'advanced' Western economies today no longer operate principally with the production system popularised by Henry Ford or the scientific management of Frederick Taylor but instead, in adapting to heightened global competition and technological developments, exhibit new features that can only be described as 'post-Fordist' (see Hall and Jacques, 1989; Harvey, 1989; Kumar, 1995). The key notion here is *flexibility*: in terms of production, mass production is exchanged for pliable niche production; in terms of organisational structure, hierarchies are flattened and managerial functions streamlined; and in terms of the workforce, 'jobs for life' are dissolved as contracts from top to bottom of the occupational ladder become temporary and insecure in a drive to improve efficiency. All this, the argument goes, demolishes working-class collectivism and the strength of the trade unions (Harvey, 1989) whilst working to ensure that unemployment and poverty – and hence life chances *a la* Max Weber and Goldthorpe – are no longer distributed according to the class mould (see Leisering and Leibfried, 1999). In fact,

critics of class claim, coupled with the vast differentiation of occupations, extensive state services and increased affluence and spare time of today the sphere of work or production as a whole – the domain of classes as traditionally conceived – is simply of less relevance in maintaining domination or determining attitudes, identities, lifestyles and life chances than other social divisions or the realm of leisure and consumption (Alt, 1976; Bell, 1976; Offe, 1985; Saunders, 1987; Pahl, 1989; Pakulski and Waters, 1996; Baudrillard, 2001).

But is the realm of leisure, consumption and, more broadly, culture not simply home to class differences translated into consumer goods and lifestyles? Not, say critics, given that the improved income of manual workers has opened up access to goods and lifestyle pursuits previously unattainable; that with the advent of postmodernism the distinction between the high culture associated with the upper classes and the mass culture of the working class is breaking down, thus blurring the boundaries between the classes themselves in perception; and that, finally, the expanding media and advertising industries bring a profusion of information and images not only exposing and indeed propagating different ways of life but which cannot themselves be assimilated to any hierarchy or social division (see *inter alia* Lash and Urry, 1987, 1994; Harvey, 1989; Clark and Lipset, 1991; Featherstone, 1991; Crook *et al.*, 1992; Baudrillard, 2001).[3] Taken together with the changes in the economy, it is claimed, all these processes have effaced the old class cultures embedded in occupational communities and famously documented by Hoggart (1957), Dennis *et al.* (1969) and Jackson (1972) and established choice, variety and ambiguity across the board, with tastes and lifestyles being cast as expressions of individuality rather than as signs of membership of any distinct group. If there are any distinguishable collectivities to speak of in this mass of individuals, detractors add, then these are *status* groups based on, for example, subcultural (or 'neo-tribal') symbols (e.g. of punk or goth), religion or ethnicity – the last two of which are seen as of increasing importance given global migration and the emergence of multiculturalism as a theoretical and political issue – rather than economic divisions (Pakulski and Waters, 1996; Bennett, 1999).

---

[3] It is interesting to note, however, that some of the most influential explanatory accounts of the emergence of postmodern culture are either Marxist in orientation (Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991) or inspired by Bourdieu's class theory (of which more later) (Lash and Urry, 1987; Lash, 1990; Featherstone, 1991).

Finally, the changes in the economic and cultural spheres have, some claim, undergirded and dovetailed with a decline of class politics in the last two decades of the twentieth century, evidenced in the UK by the incessantly contested psephological fact that manual workers no longer tend to vote predominantly for Labour or white-collar workers and the self-employed for the Conservatives (Särlvik and Crewe, 1983; cf. Clark and Lipset, 1991). Rising levels of prosperity, occupational shifts and, crucially, the emergence of 'post-materialist' issues and dilemmas through the eighties – the threat of nuclear disaster, increasing environmental damage, equality for women, ethnic minorities and homosexuals – have, it is argued, ensured that the material issues that once propelled traditional class politics – taxation levels, working conditions and nationalisation versus privatisation – no longer play a significant part in shaping individuals' political attitudes, activism or ballot box decisions (Inglehart, 1977, 1990; Clark, 2001; see also Mercer, 1990). As a result, the 'forward march of labour' has, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm (1981), been halted and superseded by a flood of 'new social movements' addressed to the post-materialist issues. In reaction, theoreticians of the left 'retreated from class', as Wood (1986) puts it, and championed the social movements as sites of struggle capable of inaugurating the better society the working class failed to achieve – shifting from Marxism to post-Marxism (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; cf. Gorz, 1982; Hall and Jacques, 1989) or at least to a heavily reconstructed version (Habermas, 1987) – whilst the Labour Party, along with other left-leaning European political parties, reinvented itself by jettisoning its commitment to the working class and socialism. In the process, and aided by the individualist rhetoric (and the policies) of Thatcher and later New Labour and the changing concerns of social and political scientists on the left and right, the idea of class ceased to frame political debates over socio-economic inequality and instead discourse on 'social exclusion' or the 'underclass', said to consist of the long-term un(der)employed and other marginalised groups, took centre stage (see Westergaard, 1992; on New Labour see Fairclough, 2000; Levitas, 2005; cf. Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 296–314, and Wacquant, 2004a: 108ff, on similar processes in France and the US respectively).

From Heterodoxy to Cultural Class Analysis

All of these changes and challenges could be, and indeed have been, countered by class analysts and others on the grounds of their empirical existence, the nature and extent of their consequences for class and the conceptualisation of class held to be in decline – to give just one example, the apparent arrival of post-industrialism and consequent diminution of the traditional proletariat has hardly troubled non-Marxists willing to adjust their class schemes to the new scenario and identify a new working class, or new part of the working class, located in lower level service occupations such as cleaning, fast food service and the like (Esping-Anderson, 1993). Nevertheless, the close of the twentieth century was a turbulent period for class analysis, with a whole array of critics, some of whom once researched and theorised the concept themselves, proclaiming class redundant, dead or dying on the one hand whilst a faithful knot of defenders vociferously asserted its continued salience on the other (see the debates in Lee and Turner, 1996; Clark and Lipset, 2001; and those between Pakulski and Waters and their critics in the 1996 volume of *Theory and Society*; see also Hindess, 1987; Pahl, 1989, 1993; Goldthorpe and Marshall, 1992; Adonis and Pollard, 1997; Kingston, 2000).

At the same time, faced with the unrelenting calls for class to be abandoned, mounting dissatisfaction with the limitations of the dominant approaches and broader moves within the sociological field, particularly the increased interest in cultural processes (the 'cultural turn'), the field of class analysis began to transform and, in many ways, to revitalise itself – reflected in claims from practitioners that class analysis was 'fragmenting' (Crompton, 1996, 1998) and, later, being 'renewed' (Crompton *et al.*, 2000).[4] Heterodox conceptualisations of class were proffered that challenged the hegemony of the Wright-Goldthorpe couplet by taking their lead not just from Marx or Weber but from figures theretofore alien to contemporary studies of the concept such as Durkheim and Ricardo, all of which claimed to provide a 'sounder base for class analysis' (Sørenson, 2000), to better capture empirical processes and to more effectively counter the propositions of

---

[4] Social conditions also played their part, of course. In particular, it seems that the increased penetration of social science by women from self-proclaimed working-class backgrounds keen to document and make sense of their own experiences has been of consequence for the developments discussed below (see, for instance, Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997).

class antagonists (see the showcases in Crompton *et al.*, 2000; Wright, 2005a). Many of these continued to share features of Wright's and Goldthorpe's perspectives, such as the commitment to primarily quantitative research and economism, but one cluster of writers in this plurality has engineered a significant departure – sometimes bringing previously marginal themes and approaches into the ascendant and sometimes subverting extant divisions altogether – and had a profound influence on class theory and research over the past ten years or so, especially in the UK: the so-called 'cultural class analysts'.

The core characteristics of this stream of thought – a heterogeneous collection of like-minded researchers rather than a 'school' of any kind who count amongst their key exemplars Skeggs (1997, 2004), Reay (1998a) and Savage (2000) – are twofold. On the one hand, they recognise to a greater degree the kinds of social changes and challenges documented above and, rather than simply asserting the continued potency of class through advanced statistical tests in the manner of Goldthorpe and his colleagues, endeavour to lay bare, usually (though not exclusively) through qualitative research, the multitude of ways in which class has been reconfigured (Savage, 2003: 536). On the other hand, and in order to follow through on the first aim, the cultural class analysts have sought to distance themselves from the occupation-based and utilitarian perspective of Goldthorpe.[5] This second task has been achieved primarily by detailing the ways in which class is reproduced through *cultural* processes and, even if passed over in silence, manifest in identities, consciousness, dispositions and lived experience (see especially Reay, 1998b; Devine and Savage, 2000, 2005; Savage, Warde and Devine, 2005). In pursuing this dual agenda the common theoretical foundation has been neither Weber nor Marx, but Bourdieu's vision of class, first formulated (in

---

[5] For his own part, Goldthorpe responded to the events of the nineties by attempting to distance himself from empiricism and deepening both his commitment to a form of Weberianism (testified in his defence of the analytical split between class and status in Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007a) and his rational-action theory of agency in which individuals optimise given situational constraints and their knowledge of them (Goldthorpe, 2000, 2007a, 2007b). This vision of action is, however, imposed on statistical trends and patterns without any detailed (i.e. qualitative) investigation of decision-making processes and, furthermore, victim to a surfeit of ambiguities inherent in the attempt to render rational action theory plausible: agents *consider, evaluate and take into account* (e.g. 2000: 184–5) costs and benefits not in some 'obscure subintentional' way (184) yet decisions are *not necessarily ratiocinative or explicit* (203), class cultures and norms play *no part* in the formulation of action as only economic constraints and resources enter into the frame (184; cf. Devine, 1998) yet class cultures act as 'guides' of rational action (203) whilst parental encouragement, social connections, accents, lifestyles and *savoir faire* may be important in securing the reproduction of the service class (249–50), and so on (for fuller critiques see Devine, 1998; Savage, 2000: 85–8).

French) long before Goldthorpe's or Wright's positions (see Bourdieu, 1966) but generally marginal in influence in the English-speaking world compared to his well-known studies of education until the nineties, and in particular his notions of *capital* (in its economic but also, importantly, cultural and symbolic forms), *social space* (a relational space in which agents are positioned dependent on their possession of different types of capital) and *habitus* (the dispositions formed out of practical engagement with the materially-shaped environment shared by those close in social space).[6]

The appeal to Bourdieu has been profitable. *Theoretically* it has laid bare the fallacies of the utilitarian model of agency employed by Goldthorpe and Wright by identifying the practical, pre-reflexive and dispositional nature of action flowing out of differentiated past social experiences and the inextricability of cultural frameworks and resources in the formation of 'choices' (see especially Devine, 1998; Savage, 2000), succeeded in reconnecting the analysis of class with broader trends in social and cultural theory (see e.g. Skeggs, 2004; Adkins and Skeggs, 2004) and even facilitated reflection on the moral dimension of class, that is, its invidious role in dictating perceptions of self-worth (Sayer, 2002, 2005). *Empirically* it has granted a deeper exploration of the relational sense of identity, difference and similarity articulated by individuals (Savage, 2000; Savage *et al.*, 2001), the experiential content of differing positions in the social order and, in particular, the denigration and dispossession pervading life in the lower sections (Skeggs, 1997; Charlesworth, 2000), the reproduction of inequality through differential possession of certain forms of capital and its manifestation in everyday life (Reay, 1998a; Devine, 2004; cf. Lareau, 2003) and the underlying dispositions and outlooks marking out differences and orienting action in certain locales (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst, 2005a). Yet the cultural class analysts have not adopted Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus wholesale. Instead, the practice has generally been to appropriate those aspects best suited to illuminating the empirical processes unearthed, to blend them with insights from other theories and take them in original directions (e.g. Skeggs, 2004), and to be critical of them in constructive ways when the social world has called for it (e.g. Longhurst and Savage, 1996;

---

[6] Bourdieu's theory has also come to prominence in the US recently, as evidenced by Weininger's (2005) essay in Wright's (2005a) collection of 'approaches to class analysis', but not in the same systematic way as amongst the cultural class analysts in the UK and, moreover, the emphasis there has almost exclusively been on the concept of cultural capital.

Sayer, 2005). Undoubtedly this flexibility has yielded constructive consequences. but partial and at times superficial application has also resulted in some theoretical inconsistency – such as hypostatising classes as real entities with substantial properties by labelling them 'working class' and so on, thus contradicting or at least failing to acknowledge the fully relational and constructionist aspects of the formation of collectivities according to Bourdieu[7] – and occasionally crude understanding – for example Devine's (2004: 69) reduction of cultural capital to 'awareness of how systems work' and high expectations and aspirations (what mobility researchers would call *social* capital) rather than the kinds of familiarity and ease with certain forms of valued knowledge, i.e. what might be called 'intelligence', 'culturedness' and self-confidence, inculcated through socialisation that Bourdieu tries to convey with this term.[8]

More substantial concerns about the cultural class analysts' approach have been registered by several critics, many of which, in reaction to the move away from the one-sided economism of Marxist or Weberian approaches, seem to coalesce around the role of the economic dimension in their studies but none of which, to be frank, are particularly troublesome. Crompton and Scott (2005), for example, warn that Bourdieu-inspired studies of class threaten to underplay the economic inequality at the heart of alternative conceptualisations of class; Bottero (2004), attempting to reassert the importance of the Cambridge school's 'interaction distance' approach, declares that the focus on relational difference in social space really amounts to 'individualized hierarchical differentiation' and stratification rather than class; whilst critics of class more generally reject the Bourdieusian approach for its 'definitional inflation' of a term that should be restricted to the economic sphere alone (Pakulski and Waters, 1996; Kingston, 2000). Of course, all of these not only fail to appreciate the centrality of the material dimension in Bourdieu's scheme – economic capital plays a crucial role in structuring social space and shaping the life chances, experiences and thus habitus attached to certain positions, whilst Bourdieu (1997a: 54) has also stressed that

---

[7] Bourdieu himself is guilty of this at times, but in more reflective works he uses the fully relational terms 'dominated' and 'dominant' to describe the classes instead. These are the terms used in this study.

[8] Expectations and aspirations are, however, fair empirical indicators of the dispositions of the habitus, as an orientation to present and future action adapted to objective probabilities, which is itself an indicator of the cultural (and economic) capital marking an agent's situation. Devine's misunderstanding, insofar as she neglects the habitus, is therefore effectively a short circuit.

cultural capital, seeing as it requires distance from necessity to be accrued, ultimately has its roots in economic capital – but they also imply something of a *conservative* approach, weighted by the dead hand of tradition, in which the concept of class should be reserved for economic processes alone simply because by and large it has been hitherto. As for the critics of class, sticking to a narrow conceptualisation is necessary if their argument is not to fall to pieces from one page to the next, seeing as at least one of them then goes on to document the importance of education – the institutionalised form of cultural capital *par excellence* – in shaping attitudes and lifestyles (Kingston, 2000).

Situating Individualization and Reflexivity

This, then, is the state of class analysis and theory at the dawn of the twenty-first century. So what of the ideas of Giddens, Beck and Bauman on individualization and reflexivity? How do they fit in with all that has been said hitherto? Briefly put, all three thinkers recognise many of the societal shifts recounted above and put their own distinctive spin on them to contend that contemporary Western societies have entered a new phase of social history distinct from, though ultimately still rooted in, the period of modernity theorised by the classics. For Giddens this epoch is one of 'late' or 'high' modernity; for Beck it constitutes a 'second' or 'reflexive' modernity; for Bauman, who spent an influential period in the postmodernist stable and only recently restyled his position, today's societies are best described as 'liquid' modern. All three, to greater and lesser degrees, put risk, globalisation and the waning of tradition at the core of their conceptualisations of the current global order and trace their multiplex effects on a variety of dimensions of social life, including familial relations, politics and, of course, class. On the last of these they converge on a common theme which, nevertheless, is conceptualised in idiosyncratic ways (cf. Warde, 1994; Howard, 2007): the evermore reflexively self-constructed nature of identities, lifestyles and life paths with the retreat of traditional modes of existence and the proliferation of

choice – Beck and Bauman dub this 'individualization', Giddens prefers to talk of the 'reflexive project of the self'.[9]

Unsurprisingly, whilst figuring more generally in today's textbooks on sociology and social theory as key interpreters of our times, Giddens and the others have been hailed by anti-class theorists as significant influences and allies in their assault on class (e.g. Pakulski and Waters, 1996), cited ceaselessly by class analysts as paradigmatic of the sort of position they are battling against (see, for example, the 2005 special issue of *Sociology* dedicated to class in which Giddens and Beck appear repeatedly) and pivotal to the rethinking of class amongst some of the cultural class analysts (e.g. Savage, 2000). It is hard to deny, therefore, the considerable bearing of these thinkers on the present and the future (and in some cases, ironically enough, the past) of the concept of class. What is not so hard to deny, however, is that despite the implications of their ideas and their pervasive influence on anti-class sentiment, the response by class analysts, and others for that matter, has, to date, been wanting. For whilst three types of extended reaction can be identified, it remains that, despite the significant contributions made in each case, all have failed to provide an adequate or comprehensive assessment – or even a thorough clarification – of the exact theses under scrutiny. The first of these, whilst forwarded by class analysts across the conceptual divides, is associated primarily with Goldthorpe and his colleagues; another two can be attributed principally to the cultural class analysts.

Response 1: Falsifying Foundationless Flights of Fancy

Having doggedly defended class from previous detractors in a controversial paper that confirmed his predilection for empirical rigour (Goldthorpe and Marshall, 1992) and ignored the ideas of individualization and reflexivity for some time, Goldthorpe (2002; also 2007a: 91–116) has recently dished out what amounts to a two-pronged criticism of Giddens and the others. On the one hand, he claims, the theories of individualization and reflexivity are devoid of empirical content and

---

[9] Such ideas, as Beck himself has acknowledged more than the others, are not necessarily new. Peter Berger, for example, anticipated much of what Giddens and the others would claim when he wrote in the seventies of the 'individuation' and proliferation of choice brought by modernity (Berger, 1977: 75ff) and the fact that biographies and identities have become 'design projects' to be worked upon (Berger *et al.*, 1974: 71ff; cf. also Luckmann, 1983: Part 2).

thus credibility, whilst on the other, when empirical studies around the topic *are* examined or research designed specifically to test their claims their speciousness is swiftly demonstrated. On the first charge, whilst many have accused Giddens, Bauman and Beck of propounding a 'data free' brand of grand theory hopelessly detached from the world of empirical reality and relying on the force of argument and their appeal to 'commonsense' to hammer home their view rather than on concrete findings of others or their own research (Marshall, 1997: 16; Savage, 2000: 105; cf. Bradley *et al.*, 2000; Skeggs, 2004: 53; Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Mythen, 2005a; Fevre, 2007), Goldthorpe, a dedicated empirical researcher long critical of what he calls 'socio-cultural punditry' (1991: 419), has undoubtedly been the most systematic and scathing participant in this line of attack. Denouncing the claims of Beck, Giddens and similar theorists as 'without foundation' (2002: 11), 'fanciful' (12), 'more a matter of assertion than demonstration' (14) and ignorant of countervailing evidence (17), he reprimands their use of social scientific evidence for being 'at best patchy and selective and at worst non-existent' (22), consisting largely of deferential references to the abstract concepts of like-minded theorists or a few select empirical studies, and claims that, as a result, they can 'scarcely be taken seriously' (11).

Goldthorpe and the others certainly have a point. Bauman, as perceptive as he may seem to some, forwards his claims on the basis of virtually no empirical evidence and sticks instead to the writings of others and, at best, anecdotes, whilst Giddens rests his theory of reflexive self-formation almost exclusively on the content of contemporary self-help books – a source which can only ever furnish a very particular perspective on the contours of everyday life under 'late modernity'. Beck, on the other hand, is a slightly more complex case. Whilst he might not sully his hands in the research process to the same extent as Goldthorpe he does occasionally use statistics to buttress some of his points (see especially Beck, 2000a), he has made reference to qualitative research (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32) and, in places, he displays a sensitivity to the translation of his ideas into viable research programmes (see e.g. Beck *et al.*, 2003: 19ff and see also 29n1; Beck and Willms, 2004: 185–7; Beck and Lau, 2005). But than again, the references to statistics and qualitative research are few and far between, rudimentary to say the least and often superficially deployed, whilst, perhaps most surprisingly of all, in one focal essay he mobilises fictional characters in novels as

his primary font of evidence (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 1–21). An imposing edifice of bold assertions has, it seems, been built on flimsy foundations.

But this is not all, Goldthorpe (2002: 20) contends, for when the relevant literature *is* surveyed it quickly becomes clear that the kind of processes Giddens and the others posit as widespread, "insofar as they are in evidence at all, turn out to be far less dramatic, far more limited and also far more cross-nationally variable than the authors in question would suppose...". It is therefore no surprise that they cite little in the way of evidence, Goldthorpe (2002: 13) quips, seeing as little can be found. A similar conclusion is reached by Breen and Rottman (1995: 154–5), colleagues of Goldthorpe who claim allegiance to his definition of classes and its attached rational action theory, in their brief review of the literature around life chances: educational attainment, social mobility and a myriad of other areas – and here they appeal to Ivan Reid's well-known compendium of class inequalities (latest edition 1998) – remain, contrary to what Beck (who they take as their target) claims, decisively structured by class. Not content with merely reviewing the findings of others, however, Goldthorpe has also conducted his own analyses to test some of the claims of Beck and others as they relate specifically to economic security, stability and prospects, ultimately, in the falsificationist spirit characterising much of his work, refuting their conjectures and asserting the continued significance of class (Goldthorpe and McKnight, 2006).

This undoubtedly deals a considerable blow to the theories of individualization and reflexivity, but not a fateful one. For one thing, in line with their general research orientation the counter-evidence marshalled by Goldthorpe and his affiliates has almost exclusively been quantitative in nature, and there is a sense in which undertaking or reviewing investigations of that ilk, whilst useful, offers only a partial and, in many respects, problematic reply to the theorists of individualization and reflexivity. Statistics cannot, for instance, actually reveal in any definitive or meaningful way whether or not biographies are steered by increasingly reflexive decision-making *within* the unequal patterns revealed. After all, Beck (at times at least, e.g. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 30–1), Bauman and others (e.g. Furlong and Cartmel, 2007) state explicitly that individualization need not necessarily evidence itself in a comprehensive reorientation of patterns of inequality, but only an alteration of the processes through which that inequality is reproduced and the social meaning attached to it. This is not helped by

Goldthorpe's volunteered explanation for some of the patterns – that agents are acting rationally given the situations they are in and the information available – which is at one and the same time not actually incompatible with the general idea of reflexivity – explicit decision making based on an increased level and variety of available information and awareness of situations – but incapable of exploring the possibility of a *differential distribution of the propensity toward or ability for* such 'rationality' or reflexivity (see below).[10] With his mode of analysis, then, it is difficult to fully assess whether some of the claims of Giddens and the others have any merit or not.[11]

Furthermore, the whole issue of identities (or 'subjectivity' more generally) and lifestyles, vital to the claims of Giddens and the others, exposes the limits of Goldthorpe's method of defending class. As regards identities, for example – an area generally sidelined by Goldthorpe himself or reduced to political proclivities – not only has quantitative research addressed to the claims of Giddens, Beck and Bauman on the salience of class identities, solidarities and perceptions produced rather more ambiguous results than other facets of Goldthorpe's defence – purportedly revealing at least some support for individualization (Roberts *et al.*, 1994; Phillips and Western, 2005; Heath *et al.*, 2007; Nollmann and Strasser, 2007) – but of course there is the question of how adequately quantitative research of the kind favoured by Goldthorpe captures identities as they are formed, lived, experienced and articulated in their full complexity anyway. Any possibility of, for example, tapping the analytically important ambivalence and anguish of individuals who may be caught between individualized modes of existence and class-based understandings, demonstrated by qualitative research (Savage, 2000; Savage *et al.*, 2001; cf. Brannen and Nilsen, 2005), is lost, as is, more generally, the prospect of grasping the deep-seated subjective experiences of difference and

---

[10] Witness, for example, Goldthorpe's (2007b: 285n14) claim that it is *irrelevant* (or 'of no consequence') whether choices take the form of explicit decision-making procedures or are implicit, piecemeal and emergent over time (cf. also his bold assertion that instrumental rationality is a human universal and therefore not, as some studies have claimed, differentially distributed – 2007a: 177–83; 2007b: 84).

[11] To be fair to Goldthorpe, it should be noted that he does allow room for other explanations of regularities so long as they can prove themselves empirically (which he claims they can not) and admits that qualitative methods, specifically ethnography, are better equipped to clarify causal processes 'on the ground' and should thus be used as a complement to survey research (2007a: 81ff) – though neither he nor any of his associates actually use such methods.

similarity rendered in an idiom alien to fixed-choice survey questions that may, contra Beck and the others, continue to pervade quotidian life.

As to lifestyles, it should be noted that Goldthorpe, finally addressing the issue of culture with Tak Wing Chan after many years of declaring it irrelevant to his interests, has recently asserted that lifestyle patterns (readership of newspapers and omnivorous or univorous musical tastes and attendance at the theatre, dance events and the cinema) [12] are, according to his explicitly Weberian conceptualisation of stratification, more in line with status divisions – constructed through patterns of differential association – than class (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2004, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; cf. Scott, 2002). This does not invalidate the salience of class in Chan and Goldthorpe's eyes, seeing as class and status are separable, nor does it imply that lifestyles are reflexively constructed – though their rejection of individualization is less forthright and unambiguous than their confutation of Bourdieu's perspective and, furthermore, based on a weak understanding of Giddens, Beck and Bauman, who are hastily reviewed indeed, and a conflation of their perspective with postmodernism – but it does admit that class has a rather feeble bearing on cultural consumption.

Yet this kind of empirical claim rests entirely on the conceptual definition of 'class' in play, and in Goldthorpe's case it is a narrow, one-dimensional, economistic one that severs class from culture and consciousness by definition rather than seeing them as inextricably interconnected. For Bourdieusians, for whom culture and lifestyles are core to the conceptualisation of class, this result is, therefore, hardly satisfactory. Neither is Chan and Goldthorpe's supposed rebuttal of Bourdieu's theory, seeing as it is rooted in a poor reading that misunderstands and downplays the role of cultural capital in structuring social space – such that Chan and Goldthorpe, like the critics of class mentioned above, can demonstrate the significance of education on cultural consumption but fail to recognise this as cultural capital and thus proof of class *à la* Bourdieu in action – as well as an unsatisfactory definition of cultural practice that explicitly excludes cultural knowledge and 'private' tastes from consideration and the imposition of a class

---

[12] Cultural omnivorousness is a term coined by Richard Peterson and his colleagues in the US, their basic argument being that the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture has given way to a distinction between 'omnivores' from high-status positions who display a taste for a wide and eclectic range of practices and goods – from polo to pool, Mozart to Madonna – and low-status univores who stick to one practice or genre in the different cultural spheres (see Peterson and Kern, 1996; Peterson, 1997).

schema and linear methods of statistical analysis at odds with the assumptions of the Bourdieusian approach. Indeed, recent quantitative analysis carried out by researchers sympathetic and sensitive to Bourdieu's framework has uncovered patterns of cultural differentiation broadly consistent with it (see the June/September 2006 special issue of *Cultural Trends*, especially Gayo-Cal *et al.*, 2006), though even here there are instances of unfaithfulness and a scant causal logic that still fails to grapple in any depth with the possible existence of some form of reflexivity. Overall, then, Chan and Goldthorpe's evidence, like Goldthorpe's more generally, remains far from conclusive or incontrovertible.

Response 2: Mediated Reflexivity/Individualization

The second response to Giddens, Beck and Bauman is rather more reconciliatory than Goldthorpe's reaction insofar as it begins by *accepting* the force of their argument but puts forward a particular and fairly heavy qualification: the reflexive construction of lifestyles and biographies may indeed be a feature of contemporary Western societies, but it is *unequally distributed*. In other words, those taking this line claim, individualization and reflexivity, far from obliterating class differences once and for all, may be *mediated by class* and, in fact, constitute the central criterion of a new class divide. The first to offer such a view was Scott Lash (1994) in his contribution to a book co-authored with Beck and Giddens, his contention being that the new reflexivity infusing social processes is refracted through relations to the 'mode of information' such that whilst the working class and middle class emerge, to differing degrees, as 'reflexivity winners', the underclass that has splintered off from the lower sections of the working class and descended into a jobless anomie is excluded from reflexivity and therefore rendered 'reflexivity losers'. More recently Elliott (2002: 303–4), drawing inspiration from Lash, has blasted Beck (the target of his critique) for disregarding the fact that "vast gaps in the socio-cultural conditions of the wealthy and the poor drastically affect the ways in which individuals are drawn into the project of reflexive modernization" and that "individualization (while undoubtedly facilitating unprecedented forms of personal and social experimentation) may directly contribute to, and advance the proliferation of, class inequalities and economic exclusions". Mythen (2005a: 138; cf. 2005b), furthermore, avers that

whilst 'everyone seems destined to share a similarly individualized experience' according to Beck, the enduring reality is that "[d]ifferent social groups are destined to encounter contrasting employment and life experiences, with insecurity and risk being concentrated amongst the lowest paid, least educated tranches". In sum, he proposes, '[r]ather than supplanting social structures, individualization nestles into existing hierarchies and bleeds into multi-source biographies'. However, whilst these interventions undoubtedly broach a conceivable possibility – though one explicitly rejected by Beck (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 206) – they remain generally unsubstantiated, sketchy and incomplete. Elliott and Mythen both, for example, focus solely on Beck's perspective and all three, not being class theorists, make their points as relatively brief asides or components of broader conceptual arguments – Elliott on the inadequacies of Beck's sociology of risk, Mythen on the deficiencies of the individualization thesis as it relates primarily to employment, and Lash in the context of outlining his own distinctive approach to reflexivity.

There are others within this general line of attack though, some of whom, most notably the cultural class analysts, take the argument a step further. Taking heed of Bourdieu's assertion that denials of class are integral to the struggle to represent symbolically the social space of differences (Bourdieu, 1987: 2; 1991b: 133; 1993a: 57; on Giddens in particular see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001), in their version the basic proposition that individualization and reflexivity resonate with the experiences and style of life of the middle classes or a cosmopolitan elite is granted, but added to this is the assertion that the theories of Beck and Giddens (though not Bauman, who is actually mobilised as a *counter* to the other two on the basis of his depiction of intellectuals in *Legislators and Interpreters* – Savage, 2000: 151; Skeggs, 2004: 54) are little more than grandiose attempts to generalise this experience – free of constraint and inscription by others – to the populace at large, serving the interests of the privileged and reproducing inequality by legitimising, or even directly influencing, the prevalent neo-liberal climate emphasising unbridled individualism, 'choice' and responsibility (Skeggs, 2004: 52–4; see also Reay, 1998b; Savage, 2000: 108; cf. Anthias, 1999). Yet as interesting as they are these accusations remain based on a perfunctory and sometimes polemical assessment of Giddens and Beck and a lack of engagement with their actual concepts in the detail that their influence suggests they deserve –

or with Bauman at all. What is more, the cultural class analysts assume without any real evidence or theoretical elaboration that individualization and reflexivity do indeed characterise the middle classes or the elite in some way. This allows, probably against their intentions, at least a partial vindication of Giddens and the others, but it also leaves several significant conceptual questions unanswered. Is the reflexivity of the middle classes, for example, really due to the specific causal processes theorised by Giddens, Beck or Bauman, or merely of the distance from necessity they have long enjoyed? How would the former, and the idea of reflexivity more generally, fit with the notion of habitus?

Answers to these questions do, however, surface in the related, though hitherto unconnected, debate over the idea of the 'reflexive habitus'. For Bourdieu the habitus, as a set of durable dispositions and schemes of perception etched into individuals through practical engagement in the world and functioning 'below the level of consciousness and language' (Bourdieu, 1984: 466), is generally seen as inimical to the constant reflexive refashioning by individuals envisaged by Giddens and the others, though reflexivity is possible as a *methodological* precept of social science – in which the researcher traces their own position in their disciplinary field, their trajectory and their resultant habitus in an attempt to 'grasp and fight the social and historical determinants of scientific practice' (Bourdieu, 1988a: 784) – under certain conditions, namely a 'socio-analysis' granted by distance from practical immersion in the world and knowledge of the tools of social scientific practice (see especially Bourdieu, 2003, 2004). Recently, however, a stream of scholars have steadily begun to dismantle this bar between the habitus and reflexivity to argue that the latter – as the drive to question and alter aspects of one's life and lifestyle – *may itself be a durable, unreflexive disposition* inscribed into agents by the transfigured practicalities of their late/reflexive/liquid modern social milieu (McNay, 1999; Adkins, 2003; Sweetman, 2003; for an overview see Adams, 2006). The most relevant effort in this movement to bridge Giddens, Beck and Bauman (and others) with Bourdieu – that is, the only one not concerned with reflexivity and the habitus as they relate primarily to gender – is undoubtedly that of Paul Sweetman (2003), who contends that if the habitus is the product of the practical adaptation to the basic experiences of the individual's situation, and, as Giddens and the others state, that basic experience is, under conditions of late modernity, one of chronic occupational insecurity and flexibility, evaporation of

tradition, endless pressure towards individuality and self-realisation promoted by consumer culture and diversification of informational input and choice with globalisation and the expansion of the media, then it follows that an ability or propensity to reflexively transform oneself will become an integral feature of the habitus or, as Sweetman likes to put it, 'second nature'.

This is not necessarily a blanket process, he notes, but may affect different groups to varying degrees depending on their differential exposure to the fundamental experiences of late modernity. This, then, could be the point of integration with the cultural class analysts – perhaps, it might be hypothesised, the middle classes are, despite Giddens' and Beck's urge to generalise, disproportionately subject to the pressures and processes productive of the reflexive habitus and thus clearly demarcated from unreflexive others. Yet this is certainly not Sweetman's argument. His emphasis is on the increasing preponderance of the reflexive habitus amongst all sections of society and his consideration of differences within this pattern is glancing, and of class in particular slight. The tenor of his treatment of Giddens and the others makes it obvious that, far from seeing them as myopic promulgators of minority modes of life complicit with the iniquitous status quo, he considers them to be accurate diagnosticians of today's social context in need only of fine-tuning. However, what Sweetman's position *does* have in common with that of the cultural class analysts is that it collapses the theories of individualization and reflexivity together as if they were one thesis, obfuscating the detail and specific causal logics of each in the process, and remains firmly stuck at the conceptual level, drawing only on scraps of others' research. This means that gelling the two positions to form a comprehensive response to Giddens and the others would require considerable specification and elaboration, but also that whether this would be desirable or even necessary remains very much to be seen.

Response 3: The Individualization of Class

So far we have dissected Goldthorpe's rejection of the theories of Giddens, Beck and Bauman on the basis of empirical weakness and examined the argument that individualization and reflexivity may be restricted to the more gilded, noting along the way the manifold deficiencies of both contentions. There is, however, a

third approach to reflexivity and individualization within class theory that, whilst also contributing to the first two lines of reasoning, has brokered more of a *rapprochement*, even if, at bottom, it asserts the continued salience of class like the other two responses. This is the oft-cited idea of the 'individualization of class' which, in its most basic form, asserts that objective class structures persist but subjective identities and perceptions mask this by fixing on individual traits (e.g. Roberts *et al.*, 1994; Brannen and Nilsen, 2005; Nollmann and Strasser, 2007).[13] The most elaborate version of this argument, however, is presented by Mike Savage (2000), a central figure in the cultural class analysis movement. The starting point for him is the explicit claim that if class analysis is to be revivified given its numerous challengers and attenuation in the hands of Goldthorpe and company then it must not only make space for the cultural and organisational dimensions of social life – two areas generally absent or deficient in Nuffield-style studies – but also *assimilate individualization* as theorised by Beck and Giddens (Savage, 2000: x–xi). There are, it seems, three interlaced ways in which class and individualization mesh in Savage's account.

The first of these takes place on the plane of objective inequalities and social mobility. Here, Savage (2000: chap. 4) argues, class operates not through macro-level constraints and opportunities bearing down on collectives, as Goldthorpe's mobility studies would have it, but through *individual biographical trajectories*. By this he means that education, ability and work-life career movements are the primary factors in shaping social mobility, and that whilst these seem to the lay population to nullify class differences by prioritising the achievements of individuals over their ascribed (class) position, as celebrated by the liberal class theorists, in fact these three processes remain infused by class – educational attainment and 'ability', for example, are unevenly distributed between classes – and thus smuggle it back in unrecognised. Class is, in other words, dissolved into the actions and accomplishments of individual biographies until it is no longer seen as such. The second way class is individualized – and this is perhaps the best-known aspect of Savage's argument – is through *identities* (Savage, 2000: chap. 5; cf. Savage *et al.*, 2001). Drawing on qualitative interviews with two-

---

[13] Two of the studies cited here focus only on youth transitions, an apt but not comprehensive frame for assessing individualization, whilst Nollmann and Strasser use quantitative methods to study the subjective dimension and thus fall victim to the same problems as Goldthorpe.

hundred denizens of the Manchester region, Savage outlines several features of contemporary class identities. Firstly, he notes, most people are utterly ambiguous and ambivalent about their class identity and fail to supply an unequivocal self-placement, even though they routinely use class as a 'benchmark' to place and evaluate people and see it as a salient social and political issue. Furthermore, and here we proceed to the real heart of the 'individualization of class identities', Savage claims that people use class labels to make sense of their life paths by marking out their *relational differences from others rather than membership of any collectivity*. More specifically, people employ class labels to differentiate themselves from people 'higher up' or 'lower down' and place themselves in the middle as 'ordinary' or 'normal' – either using the label 'working class' because of its assumption of working for a living and its anti-elitist connotations or 'middle class' because this designates somehow being in the middle. Class identity thus invokes not solidarity and commonality with one's peers but difference and individuality – something Savage has more recently shown, in his re-analysis of the *Affluent Worker* transcripts, to be far from a novel phenomenon (Savage, 2005).

The final nexus between class and individualization occurs in the realm of culture, and Savage's (2000: chap. 6) argument on this front is, in a nutshell, that there has been a shift from a working-class culture of individualization, in which manual labour epitomised individuality through its autonomy and independence from the employer whilst the middle class represented servitude, responsibility and accountability to the company or organisation, towards the hegemony of a middle-class culture of individualization in which careerism and occupational progress have become central to work life and viewed as 'life projects' of self-development through individual enterprise and performance. Once again, Savage emphasises, class becomes invisible but, because the habitus of the different classes shapes the perception of a 'good' career and the embodied dispositions necessary to succeed (Savage, 2000: 142, 146), it continues to exert its potent effects.

Savage's overall argument is complex, insightful and, in many ways, persuasive. Yet as a comprehensive response to the theories of individualization and reflexivity – which, of course, it never claimed to be – it falls short for several reasons. First of all, whilst the proposals on social mobility appear to tackle some of the causal processes of individualization as laid out particularly by Beck – thus recognising the thrust of his argument whilst re-reading it through a lens sensitive

to the persistence of class in a transformed state – it does not engage with, and the evidence he surveys would not supply an effective response to, a fundamental constituent of Beck and Giddens' perspectives: the issue of whether biographies are characterised in some way by increasingly *reflexive decision-making* processes. Instead individualization is taken to mean that class works through individual instantiations rather than collective mechanisms, a definition that sometimes wavers between an account of how class processes operate today and an ontological prescription for the study of class *per se* (see especially Savage, 2000: 150). This second conception problematises the link with Beck and the others' claims that individualization is an ongoing process characteristic of the current epoch and thus puts a question mark over the extent to which class can be said to be individual*ized* at all.

Similar problems taint the otherwise compelling theses on the individualization of class identities: no consideration is given to whether identities are *reflexively constructed* or not;[14] whether other identities, practices or lifestyle activities hold more significance for people and whether they morph over time with the vagaries of identity-construction; or whether individuals are exposed to amplified choice and variety in terms of how to lead their lives and how to see themselves. Instead, individuals are simply asked whether they think class is important and whether they identify themselves with a class. This is exacerbated by Savage's concentration on classed *work* cultures – autonomous manual workers versus careerist middle classes – which excludes any assessment of changes or continuities in the domain of *lifestyles or consumption* despite the latter's centrality to not only the theories of individualization and the reflexive project of the self but the Bourdieusian framework upon which Savage draws.[15] Moreover, and especially in light of his re-analysis of the *Affluent Worker* study, once again it is unclear whether class identities have become individual*ized* due to the circumstances of late modernity or whether this is the way class identity has long – or always –

---

[14] Savage *et al.* (2001: 885–7) do distinguish those who, they claim, can 'reflexively' play with class labels given their possession of ample cultural capital from those who are more defensive – but here 'reflexivity' is shorn of its connections with Giddens and Beck and reduced to simply displaying more familiarity with the discourse of class.

[15] Though cf. Savage *et al.* (1992), Savage (2006) and Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005b: chap 7). None of these is addressed specifically at Giddens and the others though, and the last of them displays an ambiguous position by describing some sections of the sample as 'unreflexive' *vis-à-vis* other, omnivorous sections, without explicitly labelling the omnivores reflexive or exploring in any detail the theoretical implications of the term (p. 170).

worked. Finally, Savage's work on identities is also marred by partialities and problems at the methodological level. Concerns over the adequacy of the questions, their ordering and the interpretation of responses, for example, have been raised in Payne and Grew's (2005) scrupulous comb-through of Savage *et al.*'s (2001) paper, but more important is the fact that, despite claiming that this is how class identification seems to work in general, Savage's sample consists primarily of middle-class (by his definition) individuals, albeit ones of varying standing, and thus precludes extensive illumination of possible differences or similarities across the full range of the occupational continuum.[16] His re-interpretation of the *Affluent Worker* interviews, conducted with those famous Luton car-assembly workers, does not remedy this either, given that the time difference between the two samples undercuts any real claim to comparability.

Many of the above problems are reflected – or perhaps rooted – in Savage's incomplete explication of Beck and Giddens' theories. His discussion of Beck, for instance, sticks firmly to *Risk Society*, an early and comparatively moderate statement of individualization, and hangs on a few well-known phrases – the individual is the 'reproduction unit of the social' and must seek 'biographical solutions to systemic contradictions' (Beck, 1992: 130, 137) – in tune with the individualization of class as he conceives it, whilst his treatment of Giddens focuses almost exclusively on the issue of life politics rather than reflexively constructed lifestyles. In both cases, the specific causal dynamics, the precise nature of reflexivity and the theses on lifestyles are overlooked, and in fact for the most part he rolls both theories together and discusses them as one position – dubbed individualization, even though Giddens does not use that term at all. And of course Bauman, who *does* deploy the term individualization, is probably closer to Beck theoretically and chimes more with the way Savage uses the term, escapes consideration altogether – not, to be fair, because of any egregious oversight on Savage's behalf, but because Bauman's position did not solidify until his disquisitions on liquid modernity contemporaneous with and subsequent to Savage's work.

---

[16] To be more precise, the sample is drawn from four residential areas illustrative of differing middle-class fractions, some of which are deemed to include the 'upper', 'older' or 'affluent' working class in their midst (Savage, 2000: 119n14; Savage *et al.*, 2001: 878–9), and if one looks to the details given by Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005b: 209–14) it can be seen that though occasionally cleaners, builders, shop assistants and more do find their way into the sample there is an overwhelming predominance of professional and managerial occupations.

Conclusion

All this leaves us with a myriad of partial engagements with Beck, Giddens and Bauman. Theorists and researchers of diverse persuasions have, along with some not primarily positioned within the field of class analysis, tackled the three thinkers from a number of angles, noted their limitations and added some credible qualifications. Yet, as has hopefully been made clear, within all these responses there still remains a lack of both a systematic, concentrated theoretical dissection and critical interrogation of individualization and the reflexive project of the self as they relate to class and an adequate empirical evaluation. The existing contributions cannot be somehow patched together to form a definitive solution either, for too many contradictions abound and gaps through which individualization and reflexivity may escape are left open. What is needed, rather, is a head-on reply that can approximate that offered by the *Affluent Worker* team against the proponents of embourgeoisement in the sixties; one that, combining conceptual critique and original research, can begin to ascertain with some degree of authority the crucial quandary of whether biographical paths and subjective identifications, tastes and affects are, in some way, individualized and subject to processes of reflexive consideration at all levels or whether, alternatively, reflexivity is a province of a privileged few; whether actively constructed 'lifestyles' are the principle font of action or whether, in actual fact, class somehow continues to exert its pernicious effects; and, ultimately, whether the subjective and objective elements of class have retreated from social life and the enterprise of class analysis finally become, to use Imre Lakatos' (1970) famous phrase, a 'degenerative research programme'. Such a reply will be pursued over the following pages, starting first in the next chapter with an elaboration and critical excavation of the three theorists' conceptual architecture.

3. The Properties and Problems of Individualization and Reflexivity

The three theories of individualization and reflexivity may be united by common themes and consequences for class analysis, but nevertheless they vary markedly in their emphasis, explicitness and causal reasoning. In order to pull out as many themes amenable to empirical investigation as possible and to lay out the sources of error that shed doubt on their credibility in their required detail, therefore, each theorist's take on the demise of class in 'late', 'second' or 'liquid' modernity will be outlined and evaluated in turn. Giddens' theory of the reflexive project of the self, with all its logical consequences and implicit assumptions, will be the first under the microscope, followed by the ideas of probably the most forthright critic of class of the three, Beck. Bauman will be considered last because his intellectual proximity to Beck means that his theory of individualization is best understood and its particularities made clear once the position of the German thinker from which he borrows has first been elaborated.

Anthony Giddens: The Reflexive Project of the Self

Despite being formulated over fifteen years ago and then left behind for the world of politics, Giddens' views on late modernity and the place of social class within it remain highly influential. The core concept at the heart of his position is the so-called 'reflexive project of the self', and the starting point here is what he calls, following Laing (1965), 'ontological security'. This is not a new concept for Giddens – ontological security was first introduced in his structuration days as a principle explanans for the orderly, routine nature of social life, the essential premise being that individuals have a basic psychological need to quell anxiety and maintain trust in the continuity of events (i.e. feel ontologically secure) and that this is achieved through the 'routinisation' of social conduct (Giddens, 1979: 120ff; cf. 1984: 50ff). In *Modernity and Self Identity* (1991), however, Giddens fleshes out the processes through which ontological security is generated in infancy and, in

doing so, links it directly to self-identity and thence late modernity. The argument runs as follows: the 'basic trust' that an infant invests in their caretaker as a result of early routine serves as an 'emotional inoculation' against a number of existential dilemmas and questions raised by human existence – such as finitude and relations with others – which, if contemplated continuously, would lead to an emotional paralysis. By providing tacit 'answers' to these dilemmas the inoculation produces a 'protective cocoon' around the individual, screening off potentially debilitating risks and threats emanating from daily life, and allows a sense of continuity and order in events – that is, a sense of ontological security. Importantly, one such existential dilemma is that of *self-identity*, and, in this case, the protective cocoon enables a sense of integrity and temporal continuity in the individual's biography which can then be reflexively grasped and communicated to others. A person's self-identity is, therefore, not to be found in any aspect of their *behaviour* or in the reactions of others but, following the foundational analyses of MacIntyre (1981) and Taylor (1989; cf. also Habermas, 1987: 136), consists instead of *the self as reflexively understood by the individual themselves in terms of a particular biographical narrative* linking the past (how one has become) and future (where one is going) (Giddens, 1991: 53–4). Self-identity, in other words, takes the form of an "ongoing 'story' of the self" (Giddens, 1991: 54).

In late modernity, Giddens (1991: 80) continues, the nature of the self 'undergoes massive change'. The traditions, cultures and communal ties – including those pertaining to class – upon which it once relied for its narrative have, as a result of globalisation and the chronic institutional reflexivity of the social order, been 'evacuated' from social life and supplanted by 'a context of multiple choice' (Giddens, 1991: 5; see also 1990, 1994a). As a result, the self has become a *reflexive project* in which individuals must actively choose, sustain and continuously revise their narrative of identity themselves. Each of us, he argues, now lives out

> ...a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life. Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question, 'How shall I live?' has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 14).

Self-identity thus becomes, like Luhmann's systems, 'internally referential', that is, severed from 'external' determinants of old such as kinship and place and driven

only with reference to itself. This is generally seen by Giddens, particularly in the context of the new forms of intimacy and trust it injects into relationships, in a positive light as a process of self-actualisation, self-realisation, self-exploration and self-mastery, enabling a new level of autonomy, 'freedom of action' (Giddens, 2002: 47) and 'control [over] one's own life circumstances' (Giddens, 1991: 202).[17] But it has its pathologies too, namely the burdensome nature of having to constantly reconstruct an 'inherently fragile' narrative of self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 185–6), the increased prominence of shame over the adequacy of one's identity and the inability to match up to one's 'ideal self', and the fact that the reflexive project of the self takes place in an ethical vacuum given modernity's institutional sequestration of moral issues such as death and sexuality.

One particularly significant consequence of the new reflexivity of self-identity is, according to Giddens, the increased emphasis on *lifestyle*. The proliferation of alternatives as to how to lead one's life, he argues, coupled with the removal of any authoritative guidelines on the matter, means that "we not only follow lifestyles, but in an important sense we are forced to do so – we have no choice but to choose" (Giddens, 1991: 81). A lifestyle, he goes on to argue, is "a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces [to] give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity" (Giddens, 1991: 81). It is 'adopted' rather than 'handed down', chosen from a 'plurality of possible options' rather than inherited from the past (Giddens, 1991: 81), and forms a constellation of routines, habits and orientations with an overall unity – important for the sustaining of ontological security – which 'connects options in a more or less ordered fashion' and removes some courses of action from contemplation as 'out of character' (Giddens, 1991: 81–2). Once chosen, however, lifestyles are not immutable but "reflexively open to change in light of the mobile nature of self-identity" (Giddens, 1991: 81). A second consequence, complementary to the burgeoning of lifestyle options, is an enhanced proclivity for *life-planning*. With the retreat of tradition and the sense of fate it imparted, individuals, in a similar way to the institutions of modernity, 'colonise the future' by integrating projected future actions, events and projects with their past narrative of self-identity in a coherent unity. However, not least because of the multifarious risks produced by

---

[17] Hence Giddens has described the reflexive project of the self as a 'healthy thing' (Giddens, 2003: 389), a 'fundamental benefit' of the post-traditional world (Giddens, 1991: 231).

modernity which threaten to puncture the protective cocoon with a barrage of existential dilemmas and shatter the integrity of identity, this plan is often disturbed as individuals are called upon to make high-consequence decisions for the direction of their lives. These occasions Giddens dubs 'fateful moments', and include, for example, the decision to change jobs or shift career altogether.[18] Both lifestyles and life-planning extend to the body, conceived in a non-Cartesian, Wittgensteinian mode as unified with the self in daily praxis: bodily appearance, including dress and other adornments, and demeanour become essential vehicles of self-identity, whilst the various 'regimes' of diet and exercise that individuals subject their bodies to form key components of their life-plans (Giddens, 1991: 99–102).

So what, then, are the consequences of all this for social class? After all, so long as contemporary society remains capitalist it also remains, by Giddens' own definition established in *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, a class society, and even if the underlying class structure is, by his account, marked by a sharp decline of blue-collar manual labour and a significant rise of 'wired', 'symbolic' or 'Apple Mac' workers employed in the info-tech sector or working with computers on the one hand and routine service or 'Big Mac' workers on the other (Giddens, 1994b, 2000, 2001a, 2007), the fact is there still exists a class structure. Well, at first Giddens concedes that lifestyle choices are not equally open to all strata of society but may in fact be dependent on the life chances and socio-economic circumstances of particular groups – including occupational groups (Giddens, 1991: 82) and classes (Giddens, 1997). But then again, he adds, even work in the post-traditional society "is by no means completely separate from the arena of plural choices", for "choice of work and work milieu form a basic element of lifestyle orientations" (Giddens, 1991: 82). Furthermore, though the constraints and opportunities associated with class still exist they have little bearing on the actual social behaviour of individuals (Giddens, 1995: xv; cf. 2007: 65), are "thoroughly permeated by the influence of 'biographical decision-making'" (Giddens, 1994c: 188) and, in any case, retain only a 'refracted' and transitory influence on life chances given the upsurge of mobility and unemployment at all levels (Giddens, 1994b: 143–4). Lifestyle choice and life-planning are, in other

---

[18] Fateful moments can be considered essentially a brand of what Giddens earlier referred to as 'critical situations', that is, situations in which routine is radically disrupted and ontological security threatened (see Giddens, 1979: 124; 1984: 60–1).

words, 'more or less universal': even the most deprived sections of society can and do, indeed *must*, make self-identity a reflexive project and indulge in the 'creative construction of lifestyle', often "through the resistances of ghetto life as well as through the direct elaboration of distinctive cultural styles and modes of activity" (Giddens, 1991: 85–6). In fact, Giddens contends, lifestyles *are themselves* increasingly becoming structuring features of stratification and social differentiation and can no longer, as is usually the case, be considered merely the "'results' of class differences in the realm of production" (Giddens, 1991: 82, 228; cf. 1994a: 76; 1994b: 143). Ultimately, it is obvious that for Giddens self-identity has become firmly detached from any basis in class and, logically, so too has action, as it now flows from a reflexive "filtering [of] all sorts of information relevant to [one's] life situations" (Giddens, 1994b: 6) and the lifestyle orientations and life-plans built thereon.

All this has led Giddens to subordinate the emancipatory political agenda associated with class in favour of what he calls 'life politics' (Giddens, 1991: 209–231). If emancipatory politics is a 'politics of life chances', then life politics can be considered a 'politics of lifestyle' (Giddens, 1991: 214), or of self-actualisation, addressed to the existential questions and issues brought to the fore by the increasing reflexivity of the social order – such as concerns over ecological risks, the advance of techno-economic reason and the rights of the individual over their body – that fail to fit within the traditional remit of emancipation or, for that matter, the framework of left and right in politics. The emergence of life politics presupposes a degree of emancipation from domination, of course, but they cannot be considered, says Giddens (1994b: 91), merely a phenomenon of the more affluent – to think this would be a 'basic error', for "[s]ome of the poorest groups today (and not only in the developed societies) come against problems of detraditionalization most sharply". Neither is it the case that emancipatory politics has lost its relevance altogether, but, as the feminist movement and the division between First and Third World countries illustrate, emancipation often goes hand-in-hand with lifestyle changes and, thus, life politics (Giddens, 1991: 228ff).

Giddens subsequently built on some of these ideas in outlining his well-known and much-maligned 'Third Way' political programme (Giddens, 1998, 2000). something that struck a chord with New Labour and like-minded administrations across the globe and earned him a place in the House of Lords.

However, since *Beyond Left and Right* (1994b), by far the most scholarly and interesting treatise in this body of work, the original theoretical underpinnings of Giddens' programme seem to have been largely substituted for a comparatively facile insistence on the importance of globalisation and the 'knowledge society' (see McLennan, 2004). Furthermore, in his most recent works – addressed to policy makers and a broad politically-interested public rather than sociologists – Giddens (e.g. 2007) has started to use the term 'class' more frequently again, but in a superficial, nominalist, atheoretical and unsociological way to refer to arbitrary divisions of occupations that can scarcely be taken seriously. Nevertheless, through all this his emphasis on life politics and its grounding in the prominence of post-materialist issues remains and he continues to assert that classes generally have little bearing on lifestyle practices.

Critical Comments

Giddens' vision of late modernity no doubt contains a whole host of conceptual nuggets offering an interesting take on contemporary processes, and some of his ontological prescriptions – such as the temporal constitution of self-identity – are, on the surface at least, compelling. When it comes specifically to the reflexive project of the self, however, there is no shortage of difficulties in need of teasing out, some of which spotlight cracks in his wider theoretical projects. The first of these is, quite simply, his utter ambivalence on the status of class in late modernity. In some places Giddens makes it clear that, unlike Beck (see below), he wants to *retain* the concept as a filter of life chances which, he argues, may then impact upon lifestyle options. Hence his assertion, in the preface to the second edition of *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* written after his reflections on modernity reached their apogee in the early nineties, that class analysis has not lost its importance (Giddens, 1995: xvi).[19] As seen above, however, Giddens has an unfortunate tendency to override this position completely in his effort to establish the reality of choice and reflexivity beyond the bounds of the affluent. Furthermore, if life chances really are still shaped by class then it is difficult to see how the reflexive project of the self, as 'more or less universal', can

[19] This is also the impression given in his popular textbook, which has always, even in its latest edition, dedicated a chapter to class (Giddens, 2006).

be described as bringing the individual greater 'control over their life circumstances', 'autonomy of action' (Giddens, 1994b: 13) and self-actualisation, in Abraham Maslow's (1987) sense of that term as fulfilling one's potential.

The issue is muddied even further by Giddens' inconsistent and somewhat tokenistic attempts to pull lifestyle into the definition of class and stratification. Sometimes, for example, it is argued, *a la* Bourdieu, that "the individual relates to the class system not just as a producer but as a consumer" and that therefore lifestyle choices and taste, as "mobilized in active way by individuals and groups", actively feed into social differentiation (Giddens, 1994b: 143; cf. 1991: 82), whereas in other places it is simply access to the means of self-actualisation that forms the key source of class division and inequality (Giddens, 1991: 6, 228). The latter conception is particularly problematic, for as Giddens himself has argued the reflexive project of the self – the fount of 'programmes of actualization and mastery' (1991: 9) – is undertaken even by those populating the bottom echelons of society (the black female single parent living in the inner city in his own example) (1991: 85–6). This would mean that *no one* is barred from the means of self-actualization, save the most destitute, and that class effectively, and against his original intentions, ceases to 'be' at all in this regard.

The former conception, on the other hand, raises a fundamental question to which Giddens has no satisfactory answer: why, exactly, would different individuals and groups choose *different* lifestyles? Whereas for Bourdieu, to whom he casually appeals on this, the underlying principle is the particular habitus generated out of material conditions of existence, it seems hard to deny that the overall tenor of Giddens' position, despite disclaimers, is one of outright *voluntarism*. This is something he has long been accused of by the critical realists, particularly Margaret Archer (e.g. 1982), but in his work on high modernity and the reflexive self his leanings toward it appear to have become even more apparent. Thus action is said to flow from a reflexive 'filtering of information' on ways of life and options 'relevant to [one's] life situations' (Giddens, 1994b: 6), whilst lifestyles are claimed to be 'freely chosen' (Giddens, 1991: 231) and revised by 'autonomous' agents on the basis of a self-identity constructed through a process of self-mastery and realisation – echoes of Berlin's (1969) conception of 'positive liberty' are not too faint here. There is, however, something of a tension in this: if lifestyles are to be defined as sets of routines, habits and orientations providing a

frame for choice and action, as they were above, then it is hard to see how lifestyle choices, including the decision to change lifestyle altogether, could be made *without being guided by the orientations furnished by the lifestyle already adopted.* Either the self must somehow, in a way left unexplained by Giddens, be able to transcend the orientations of its lifestyle in order to choose or else lifestyle choices are not as 'free' as Giddens would like to make out. This difficulty aside, such a position fails to illuminate how social differentiation would actually be generated. Nowhere does Giddens consider, for example, the possibility that the 'filtering' of information or the life situations one is likely to be in may vary with one's position in society – the former absence is particularly conspicuous given that he once chided mass consumption theorists heralding the dissolution of class distinctions for neglecting the fact that information 'formally identical in content' may be 'interpreted and responded to' in different ways, thus reinforcing extant patterns of social differentiation (Giddens, 1981: 222).

Even if we probe deeper into Giddens' complex theorisation of action in structuration and beyond, the inability to adequately elucidate why agents would choose to construct the identities and lifestyles they do in late modernity remains. He simply fails, as Thompson (1989: 74) has noted, to provide the necessary means to explain the differential possession between individuals and groups of particular 'wants and desires', 'interests and needs', or, in short, motivations (cf. Loyal, 2003: 61–2; Stones, 2005). In structuration theory motivation plays a key role in the constitution of the agent and is conceived as the source of the wants which prompt action and furnish individuals with projects (Giddens, 1976: 85; 1984: 6). Rooted primarily in the agent's *unconscious*, the latter understood largely in the sense attributed to it by psychoanalysis, that is, as a receptacle of repressed urges bearing an 'internal hierarchy' expressing the "'depth' of the life history of the individual actor" (Giddens, 1984: 5), it impacts upon action through psychological mechanisms of 'recall' to which the agent lacks direct discursive access (Giddens, 1984: 49; for a critique of Giddens' theory of the unconscious see Thrift, 1993). However, rather than provide the tools for an exploration of the *differences* of motivation – and thus wants, projects and lifestyle choices – between 'kinds and categories of individual' (Thompson, 1989: 74), Giddens draws on Erikson's ego psychology to define motivation and its promptings in terms of a general urge to reduce anxiety and sustain routine for the maintenance of ontological security

(Giddens, 1984: 57), with the only mention of individual differences being in the context of pathologies of psychosocial development (Giddens, 1984: 58). In this way, it becomes clear that most day-to-day conduct is not motivated in any direct way at all. Rather, as Giddens (1984: 64) puts it, "there is a generalized motivational commitment to the integration of habitual practices across time and space" – yet *precisely why individuals would have different habitual practices is never explained.* The definition of motivation is updated in *Modernity and Self-Identity* to denote "an underlying 'feeling state' of the individual, involving unconscious forms of affect as well as more consciously experienced pangs or promptings" (Giddens, 1991: 64). Importantly, Giddens now binds motivation to feelings of shame over the adequacy of one's narrative of self-identity, developed out of the tensions and anxieties generated in handling the emotional involvements of social bonds in early life, and the failure to live up to one's 'ideal self' (Giddens, 1991: 64–9). It is impossible, however, to see how this actually provides the 'wellsprings of action' (Giddens, 1991: 63), and, in any case, it retains the inability to convincingly explain behavioural (and thus lifestyle) variations between individuals and groups in a way that would be consonant with his comments on social differentiation.

Having broached the issue of ontological security, it is worth pointing out that Giddens' reliance on the concept in his theorisation of motivation is also problematic. When R. D. Laing (1965) introduced the term ontological security in his fascinating existentialist study of schizophrenia it was, essentially, to demarcate the boundary between the 'sane' or ontologically secure on the one hand and the schizoid and psychotic or ontologically insecure on the other. In Giddens, whilst the psychiatric vocabulary is jettisoned, ontological insecurity is used to imply the same sense of existential chaos, engulfment and implosion that Laing describes, involving, for example, "a loss of a sense of the very reality of things and of other persons" (Giddens, 1991: 36). Yet unlike Laing, who saw it as more of a given in healthy individuals, Giddens then goes on to depict ontological security as exceptionally fragile – being incessantly threatened in social life by even "the slightest glance of one person towards another, inflexion of the voice, changing facial expression or gestures of the body..." (1991: 52) – and in need of continuous maintenance. Held to illustrate this are Garfinkel's infamous 'breaching experiments', in which the background assumptions and routines of social life are

radically disrupted by the anomalous behaviour of the 'experimenter' (e.g. Giddens, 1984: xxiii; 1991: 36–9). In fact, however, as both Willmott (1986) and Craib (1992) have pointed out, this wholly *contradicts* Laing's definition of ontological security, for it is a fundamental characteristic of the ontologically secure agent according to Laing that they will be able to "encounter all the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual, biological, *from a centrally firm sense of [their] own and other people's reality and identity*" (Laing, 1965: 39, emphasis added) and, therefore, remain generally unperturbed by dislocations of routine – including, one might conjecture, 'fateful moments'. Furthermore, Giddens' appeal to Garfinkel's experiments as demonstrative of the frailty of ontological insecurity in daily life is not entirely justified. Garfinkel (1967) himself noted a *variety* of reactions to the disturbances wrought by the experiments other than anxiety, including surprise, puzzlement and anger, whilst the level of anxiety that was reported was, for the most part, nowhere near as acute as the term ontological insecurity is designed to convey. Moreover, as Heritage (1984: 97–101) has explicitly stated, most of the subjects of the experiments, far from exhibiting a complete disorganisation or a loss of all reality and sense, generally interpreted the actions of the 'experimenter' as an intelligible, motivated departure from normal activity demanding moral sanction.

The end result is an unjustified over-exaggeration on Giddens' behalf of the extent to which individuals are on the brink of psychological and emotional destruction in their daily lives, coupled with a more general overemphasis on the need of individuals to constantly sustain routinised ways of life. Indeed some of his critics have persuasively argued that the unremitting motivation to uphold routines (including by extension those relating to lifestyle), contrary to the voluntaristic rendering above, appears to press on action in a rather *deterministic* way, effectively amputating the facility for choice so central to Giddens' take on late modernity and self-identity (Loyal and Barnes, 2001; Loyal, 2003). In fact Giddens has recognized *exactly this*, admitting that the need to preserve routine curbs the capacity to freely choose 'how to be and how to act' (Giddens, 1994a: 75). 'Daily life', he says, 'would be impossible if we didn't establish routines, and even routines which are nothing more than habits cannot be wholly optional: they wouldn't be routines if we didn't, for longish periods of time, place them effectively "beyond question"' (Giddens, 1994a: 75). This is, of course, wildly at

odds with his other characterizations of the reflexive project of the self – including his assertion that the routines associated with a lifestyle are 'reflexively open to change' given the 'mobile nature of self identity' (Giddens, 1991: 81). So where lifestyle habits were once freely chosen, it seems, they are now not 'wholly optional', where routines were previously embraced and revised in giving material form to a narrative of identity self-constructed out of a milieu of choice they are now put 'effectively beyond question'. Thomas Kuhn (1977) once said that consistency was a vital component of any theory worth adopting; if this were true, then Giddens' perspective would hardly be enticing.

Ulrich Beck: Class as a 'Zombie Category'

Beck is perhaps the most obviously anti-class theorist amongst those considered here, for unlike the others he has been explicitly and persistently proclaiming the waning relevance of class for most of his career – at first with notable qualifications and exceptions, but more radically as his prominence grew. His position on the demise of the concept is embedded in his wider thesis that contemporary Western societies are entering a second, 'reflexive' phase of modernization in which the basic categories and assumptions of the first phase – essentially coterminous with the development of nationally-bounded industrial society and the unconstrained implementation of instrumental techno-scientific reason – are being torn apart as a result of its own dynamism (Beck, 1992, 1994, 1997; Beck *et al.*, 2003; Beck and Lau, 2005). It is, in other words, the very process of modernization itself that is, for him, undermining the foundations of industrial society through its cumulative side-effects and bringing into being a nascent stage of history characterized by radically new social forms. Two aspects of this rather broad development, he claims, are particularly consequential for class: the *changing logic of distribution from wealth to risk* as a product of the side-effects of technological development (developed in Beck, 1992: 19–50; cf. Beck, 1995: 128–57) and, more importantly, the *dissolution of large-group categories*, such as class, in the wake of an individualization of social inequality produced by the welfare state.

As regards the first aspect, Beck's contention is that, in the industrial societies of the first modernity, the axial principle was the social production and

distribution of *wealth*, though this was necessarily accompanied by a distribution of the risks produced by techno-scientific development. Both wealth and risk distribution followed essentially the same fault lines and led to the emergence of contradictions and conflicts between the 'two great hostile camps', as Marx and Engels (1848/1992: 3) put it, of labour and capital, that is, between *classes* (Beck, 1995: 137). With the onward march of modernization, however, this process has been reversed: the rising affluence and protections of welfare societies and the unleashing of hazards and threats on an unprecedented scale as a result of expanding production have rendered the logic of wealth distribution subordinate to the logic of risk distribution (Beck, 1992: 19). Class position no longer apportions the primary problems and conflicts with which one must deal; this has been replaced by one's position in relation to the *new global risks* – chemical poisoning, food contamination, nuclear disaster and so on – and the latter, Beck stresses, does not follow the logic of classes:

> ...in the water supply all the social strata are connected to the same pipe. When one looks at 'forest skeletons' in 'rural idylls' far removed from industry, it becomes clear that the class-specific barriers fall before the air we all breath. In these circumstances, only *not* eating, *not* drinking and *not* breathing could provide effective protection... Reduced to a formula: *poverty is hierarchic, smog is democratic* (Beck, 1992: 36).

Even the wealthiest and most powerful of society's denizens are "caught in the maelstrom of hazards" (Beck, 1992: 37), not least because of the 'boomerang effect' – the reacting back of risks on those who produced them – and the progressive devaluation of property (Beck, 1992: 37–9). Accordingly, new antagonisms, new interests and new political movements cutting *across* class divisions emerge, dissolving the old boundaries and uniting all victims of risk. "Risk societies", Beck (1992: 47) concludes, "are not class societies".

This, however, is not the only way in which class is being eradicated from the social landscape in reflexive modernity, for accompanying the transforming logic of distribution is a thoroughgoing erosion of the social forms and large-group categories of industrial society as the anchors of identity, life situations and inequality with the onset of *individualization*. At the heart of this phenomenon, Beck contends, is the dual process whereby, under conditions of reflexive modernity, individuals are *disembedded* from "historically prescribed social forms and commitments" (Beck, 1992: 128), including those related to class, and subsequently *re-embedded* in new ways of life in which they "must produce, stage,

and cobble together their biographies themselves" (Beck, 1997: 95). The chief mechanisms responsible for this, he continues, are the institutions and welfare state regulations of industrial societies themselves, for these, he argues, are not geared to group interests but instead "presume the individual as actor, designer, juggler and stage director of his or her own biography, identity, social networks, commitments and convictions" (Beck, 1997: 95). In particular, he notes the impact of the expanding education system, which 'recasts and displaces' traditional lifestyles and ways of thinking with 'universalistic' forms of knowledge and language (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32), furnishes individuals with a capacity for self-reflective knowledge and credentializes them on the basis of individual performance; the increased demand for and expectation of mobility and competition in the labour market which undercuts the formation of community and kinship support networks and forces agents to 'take charge of their own life' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32); the "democratization of formerly exclusive types of consumption and styles of living, such as private cars, holiday travel and so on" (Beck, 1992: 95, emphasis removed) as a result of increased standards of living, coupled with a general shift away from a cultural value system in which professional and financial well-being, a stable family life and a respectable house and car symbolize success to a new focus on 'self-fulfilment' and 'individuality' (Beck, 1998: 39–54); the extension of employment insecurity and instability and, as a consequence, potential poverty right across the socio-economic spectrum with the gradual disappearance and flexibilization of work (Beck, 2000a); the juridification of labour relations; and the dynamics of new urban housing projects which serve to shatter 'ascriptively organized' neighbourhoods (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 35). The result, Beck (1992: 92) asserts, is that class 'now has much less influence on [agents'] actions':

> People with the same income level, or put in the old-fashioned way, within the same 'class', can or even must choose between different lifestyles, subcultures, social ties and identities. From knowing one's 'class' position one can no longer determine one's personal outlook, relations, family position, social and political ideas or identity (Beck, 1992: 131).

Not only material constraints and determinations, but – here seemingly targeting the more Bourdieu-inspired – the 'practical knowledge', 'guiding norms' and 'collective habitualizations' furnished by class positions (Beck, 1992: 128; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 6) have dissipated and given way to individual agency, choice and volition in the constitution of life situations (Beck and Willms, 2004:

24). People are increasingly forced to construct their *own* biographies and self-identities from the diverse options available and to do so *reflexively* by engaging in 'the processing of contradictory information, dialogue, negotiation, compromise' and 'active management' in the pursuance of 'self-realisation' and 'self-determination' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 26).[20] Distinctive material and symbolic class differences thus dissolve "both in terms of their self understanding and in relation to other groups" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 39), effacing the identities, collective consciousness and solidarity they engendered, whilst the structure of inequality is redefined as an individualization of social risks, political action is realised not by class actors but by transient social movements established to cope with particular issues, and conflicts arise not over class antagonisms but over ascribed characteristics, such as age, gender and ethnicity (Beck, 1992: 100–1).

Beck is at pains to stress, however, that all this does not lead to an unfettered 'self-creation of the world' by emancipated individuals, for individualization is, according to him, accompanied by a tendency towards "the *institutionalization* and *standardization* of ways of life" (Beck, 1992: 90).[21] In reflexively constructing their biographical trajectories and sense of self agents have become wholly dependent on the dictates of the labour market, the education system and the consumption of "generically designed housing, furnishings, articles of daily use, as well as opinion, habits, attitudes and lifestyles launched and adopted through the mass media" (Beck, 1992: 132), whilst the search for self-fulfilment and its 'infinite regression of questions' ('am I really happy?', 'am I really fulfilled?')

> ...leads into one new 'response mode' after another, which can then be reformed in a variety of ways into markets for experts, industries and religious movements. In the search for fulfilment, people thus metamorphose under certain conditions into products of mass culture and mass consumption (Beck, 1998: 48).

It should be clear that individualization is not simply a subjective phenomenon concerning self-identities and attitudes alone, as some writers have

---

[20] Beck's notion of reflexivity often seems to entail some amount of cogitation – agents now have to 'think, calculate, plan, adjust, negotiate, define, revoke' rather than rely on habitualization or routine (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 6) – but it can also be more 'spontaneous' in form and thus differs from Archer's (2007) conception of reflexivity which specifically denotes considerable mental deliberation (cf. Lash, 2002).

[21] Thus individualization is not, as Anthony Elliott (2002) supposes, inherently inimical to George Ritzer's idea of 'McDonaldization', though Beck has rejected it elsewhere (Beck, 2000b: 42–7).

argued (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007), but a *structural* phenomenon transfiguring objective life situations and biographies. As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: xxii; cf. Beck and Willms, 2004: 63) put it:

> Individualization can no longer be understood as a mere subjective reality which has to be relativized by and confronted with objective class analysis. Because individualization not only effects the *Überbau* – ideology, false consciousness – but also the economic *Unterbau* of 'real classes'... [it] is becoming *the social structure of second modern society itself.*

Western societies are still capitalist, and yes, Beck contends, inequality of income remains stable. But it is 'capitalism *without* classes' (Beck, 1992: 88), and inequality of income firmly detached from its old moorings in class categories. But then how, one might ask, *is* inequality distributed in a social structure of individualization? Well, says Beck, inequality and poverty in reflexive modernity should be seen not as differentially distributed between *groups*, as they were in the past, but between *phases in the average work life* (Beck and Willms, 2004: 102; cf. Leisering and Leibfried, 1999). People come and go into economic hardship for a variety of (non-class related) reasons at different stages of their lives – as university students, as pensioners, after redundancy, following divorce – and this applies to the (temporarily) rich and poor, managers and manual workers alike. Consequently, individuals can hardly been seen as occupying static positions in a rigid class structure 'handed down from one generation to another' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 51). Rather, they occupy precarious, ambivalent positions that are 'subject to cancellation' in a structure conceived not in terms of locations at all, but in terms of *movement* (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 51).

In sum: "Society can no longer look in the mirror and see social classes. The mirror has been smashed and all we have left are the individualized fragments" (Beck and Willms, 2004: 107). Yet, Beck notes, the concept of class continues to be discussed and debated in mainstream sociology as if it were alive and well. Sociologists, it seems, remain, in their attempts to superimpose classes on a classless society, hopelessly attuned to the first modernity and its obsolete large-group categories. For this reason he dubs class a 'zombie category': "the idea lives on even though the reality to which it corresponds is dead" (Beck and Willms, 2004: 51–2; see also Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 201–13). Of course class is not alone as a zombie category – many other notions of first modernity such as the family, full employment and so on, are also concepts from the crypt – and this spells further trouble for class analysts, Beck argues, seeing as their flagship

concept actually depends on *other zombie categories* for its definition and operationalization. One example is the idea of a *household* conceptualized as a traditional conjugal family supported by the income of a (usually male) breadwinner, something that forms the basic unit of class analysis but which has also, in the process of 'the normal chaos of love' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) so characteristic of reflexive modernity, that is, divorce, remarriage, cohabitation, and coordinating two careers as women continue to infiltrate the labour market, become decidedly unclear (see Beck, 1997: 95; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 207; Beck and Willms, 2004: 20). A second example is the idea of a territorially-defined *nation state* as a 'container' for the class structure and its conflicts (see Beck, 2000b, 2002). Class concepts, he argues, are "deeply, intrinsically depend[ent] on the ontology of the nation state" (Beck and Willms, 2004: 104). This is true, he notes, even of Pierre Bourdieu's subtle reworking of class in terms of the distribution of different forms of capital in a social space: the idea of capital and its exchangeability, after all, "functions only in a national framework" (Beck and Willms, 2004: 105). Today, however, when individuals on all rungs of the socio-economic ladder lead more transnationally mobile, 'cosmopolitan' lives as a result of globalization, the idea of a nation state as an impermeable container is also becoming a zombie category. People often find themselves simultaneously embedded in more than one national framework, each of which positions them in starkly contrasting locations (economic migrants are the obvious example), and this throws into considerable doubt the ability of 'class' to reveal anything substantial about individuals' lives. In Beck's words: "The categories of class are simply not differentiated enough to capture such interlocked relationships of border-spanning, multi-perspectival inequality" (Beck and Willms, 2004: 105). When sociology does adopt the requisite 'cosmopolitan perspective' (Beck, 2000c), moreover, it becomes clear that to focus on national ('small') inequalities, as class analysts have been doing for the past century, obscures the analysis of more pressing global ('large') inequalities between different parts of the world and, to some extent, even *legitimates* them (Beck, 2005: 24ff; 2007).[22]

---

[22] In fact this latest twist in Beck's thought has recently led him to *abandon* individualization theory on the basis that it too is tied to a 'methodologically nationalist' perspective. Still, given that individualization as formulated by Beck remains highly influential and that his censure of methodological nationalism is seriously problematic (see Atkinson, 2007b, 2007c), his auto-critique is, alas, not enough to safely neutralise its claims on class.

Critical Comments

Ambivalence is a key theme for Beck and, as such, often finds itself attached as an adjective to a whole host of familiar sociological categories in his writings, including inequality, social structure and even society itself (see Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 42–53). It is perhaps ironic, then, that it abounds in his own work, congealing in some places to form blatant contradictions, in terms of, firstly, what exactly individualization *is* and, secondly, its precise consequences for class. On the first count, there are numerous instances in which Beck outlines the characteristic features of individualization only to completely contradict himself elsewhere – sometimes within a matter of pages. So, for example, we are told that the end of class society will consist of a steady process of 'individualization and atomization' (Beck, 1992: 99; cf. Beck and Willms, 2004: 88), but elsewhere that individualization most certainly does *not* involve atomization (Beck, 1997: 95); that individualization spells the end of sociology's 'virtual fixation' with groups and collectives (Beck, 1997: 21), but that we can identify and should investigate 'cultures of individualization' and 'collective life situations' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 207); and that individualization does not mean each individual is becoming 'more of an "authentic I"' (Beck and Willms, 2004: 67) but that the 'main activity of the self-chosen life is a search for one's true self' (Beck and Willms, 2004: 73). More centrally, however, we are told in some places that the crux of individualization consists of disembedding followed by re-embedding (Beck, 1992: 128; Beck, 1997: 95; Beck, 1998: 33; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 203), in the way described above, but in others that individualization actually consists of disembedding *without* re-embedding (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: xxii; Beck and Willms, 2004: 63). Now, even if this can be put down to an undisclosed change of mind over time – though it should be noted that the discrepancy appears within the leaves of one book (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) – it involves a very different imagery. Re-embedding conjures the idea that individuals are being re-rooted in new social forms, new social relations and ties, and new modes of 'reintegration and control' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 203) involving institutionalization and standardization (Beck, 1992: 90) – hence the term 'institutionalized individualism'; whereas permanent disembedding, bringing Beck much closer to Bauman's view on individualization in liquid modernity (see

below), indicates a more free-floating existence. The point is, such regular inconsistency, contradiction and incoherence makes it difficult to comprehend exactly what individualization is supposed to consist of and, ultimately, serves to undermine its credibility as a description of contemporary processes.

Secondly, Beck is rather equivocal on exactly how far class is being effaced in reflexive modernity. This is especially apparent in his discussion of the altered logic of distribution, in which he explicitly concedes that some risks will still be distributed along class lines and *strengthen* class society (Beck, 1992: 35): even in the risk society, he maintains, "the rule continues to hold that wealth rises to the top while risks sink to the bottom" (Beck, 1995: 137). But surely there *are no class lines* left for risk to be distributed along? What with individuals going in and out of poverty so much, surely any risks operating on socio-economic criteria cannot be described as being class-based? Why use the term if it has no structural manifestation?[23] But then Beck's view on this is hardly unambiguous either, for whilst he has energetically argued that patterns of social inequality have shifted out of the class paradigm by being distributed according to phases of life rather than groups, he has also conceded that 'no major change in the relations of inequality between major groups in our society' has taken place (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 205). More strikingly still, he has argued that, in fact, '[c]lass differences...are not really annulled in the course of individualization processes' at all, but only 'recede into the background *relative* to the newly emerging "centre" of the biographical life plan' (Beck, 1992: 131, emphasis added; cf. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 31). This, alongside the similar admission that the changes brought by individualization currently 'exist more in people's consciousness, and on paper, than in behaviour and social conditions' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 203), contradicts and thus saps the credibility from his bold declaration that individualization is no 'mere subjective reality' but a *structural* phenomenon of second modern society.

It is not, then, particularly clear what is supposedly coming into existence or how radical it really is, but neither is it clear what exactly is being eroded. Beck expends few words actually describing what class *was*, and where he does he

---

[23] This is not the only place Beck uses class to denote a continued reality: throughout his conversations with Johannes Willms (2004) he refers to eclecticism at different 'class levels' (p. 37) and the extension of work insecurity to the middle class (p. 82).

seems to vacillate between definitions to suit his line of argument. Sometimes he is fighting against Marx, as in his discussion of the changing logic of distribution and statements that classes "have their foundation in the position of a person in the industrial production process, in the antagonism of labour and capital" (Beck, 1997: 23) but that "immiseration, as the condition for the formation of classes predicted by Marx, has been *overcome*" (Beck, 1992: 96). In other places he invokes as the image of the past to be shattered by the present the Weberian definition of class, holding that whilst the "unity of shared life experiences mediated by the market and shaped by status, which Max Weber brought together in the concept of social class" applied up until the fifties, it has since begun to 'fall apart': "Its different elements (such as material conditions dependent on specific market opportunities, the effectiveness of tradition and of pre-capitalist lifestyles, the consciousness of communal bonds and barriers to mobility, as well as networks of contact) have slowly disintegrated" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 34).

Elsewhere class is defined simply as income level (Beck, 1992: 131), but most often, and somewhat at odds with the actual Weberian (or for that matter Bourdieusian) conceptualization of class in which such phenomena are relatively contingent, it appears in terms of materially-organized collective solidarity, culture, identity, community and political action.[24] This last rendering, however, coupled with the question-begging argument that biographies of old were always relayed in the language of 'blows of fate', 'objective conditions' and 'outside forces' 'overwhelming' and 'compelling' individuals compared to contemporary individualized biographies speaking only of agents' decisions, capacities and compromises (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 25), amounts to little more than a colossal caricature of the past in an attempt to make the theory of individualization appear more credible (cf. Savage, 2000). As Marshall *et al.* (1988) demonstrate, the type of homogeneous and solidary 'proletarian culture' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 42) posited by Beck has never really existed except as a construct of 'dualistic historical thinking' wishing to set up a straw man, for the working class has always, to some degree, been perforated by sectionalism, instrumentalism and privatism. This inevitably raises the question of how he can claim class is a zombie when what it looked like alive and well is either vague or distorted; how, in other

---

[24] For a flavour see e.g. Beck (1992: 13, 48–50, 113), Beck (1998: 32–8, 171n6), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 37, 42–3).

words, he can confidently identify class as a walking corpse when he is not sure what the living, breathing body looked like.

The final weakness of Beck's position emanates from his account of the *causes* of individualization. It will be remembered that the central mechanisms driving individualization are, for him, the institutions of Western welfare societies which disembed individuals from their old collective 'forms of life', to use Wittgenstein's phrase, and compel them to shape their own destinies. The problem is, however, that Beck fails to acknowledge the ways in which some of the key institutions he heralds as the *slayers* of class may be hindered in their allotted role by the fact that they are *riddled with class processes themselves*, aggravated further by the fact that he himself, once again falling victim to his own contradictions, indicates that this may be the case. One place in which this is particularly clear is his discussion of education, a central 'motor' of individualization equipping individuals with universal forms of knowledge and self-reflective capacities. There is, embedded in his writings on this, a critical rider passed over, it must be said, with some haste: the successful acquisition of universal knowledge and self-reflection is, Beck admits, dependent on both the *duration* and the *content* of the individual's education (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32). But what is likely to influence whether an individual decides to stay on at school or proceeds to university, the content or quality of the education they receive and, on top of that, their ability or inclination to absorb it? Beck remains silent, no doubt because it is hard to deny that, despite educational expansion, middle-class youth, whether because their families can mobilise economic, social or cultural resources to their advantage (Reay, 1998a; Ball, 2003; Devine, 2004) or because they have the requisite 'linguistic code' (Bernstein, 1971) or 'symbolic mastery' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) to succeed as a result of their socialization, continue to undertake post-compulsory education, to study more 'abstract' disciplines and to attend private schools and prestigious universities at a higher rate than their working-class counterparts, with the result, perhaps, that it is they who are disproportionately more likely to leave education with the 'universal' and self-reflecting knowledge that allows them to be reflexive in their labour market trajectories. This possibility is simply ignored by Beck, who instead portrays education, in spite of his telling concession that not all leave it equally reflexive, to be a remarkably 'class free' institution experienced in a uniform manner regardless of one's background.

A second dubious propellant of individualization in Beck's theory, chiming in different ways with analyses of postmodern culture and the lambasting of the 'culture industry' by the Frankfurt school, is the expansion of consumption beyond its class-specific forms into a standardizing mass phenomenon as a result of increased societal affluence and the new ethic of self-fulfilment and individuality. Some aspects of this argument are true enough: home-ownership, for instance, has spread considerably amongst the British population following the introduction in the eighties of the right to buy council houses by the Thatcher government (on this see Saunders, 1990), and living standards have, on the whole, increased, allowing extended access to a range of consumer goods. The issue, however, is over the new ethic of self-fulfilment, and once again Beck appears to trip himself up with a fatal concession: "this development does not include all population groups equally by any means", he writes, but is instead a product "of better education and higher income" – the poorer and 'less well-educated' "clearly continue to be tied to the value system of the 1950s and its status symbols" (Beck, 1998: 47). This statement, especially in light of the contradiction noted above regarding who is more likely to attain a 'better education', almost amounts to an admission that the new ethic is essentially a phenomenon reserved for the *middle classes*. Now this has important consequences in terms of consumption, for if Beck's argument is considered fully then it leads *away* from the idea of an undifferentiated 'mass consumerism' and posits instead the existence of a consumption cleavage mapped along *class lines*: on the one hand, a poorer section who strive to consume conventional goods in a conventional manner, and on the other, a more affluent and educated section who, in their quest for self-realization, flit between attitudes, activities and goods like bees in search of pollen. In fact, a strikingly similar – though more complex – argument was forwarded by Bourdieu in *Distinction*, where he identified an emerging 'new petite bourgeoisie' whose lifestyle is characterised by a search for identity and self-expression and a refusal to be assigned to a class – all demonstrated in the vast number of practices they undertake, from aikido to yoga, astrology to weaving, dance to transcendental meditation (Bourdieu, 1984: 354–71). This class fraction, comprised mainly of producers and propagators of symbolic goods (those in sales, marketing, advertising) and consultancy and social assistance professions (such as social workers, counsellors, youth leaders, therapists) was, for Bourdieu, ascendant and its lifestyle becoming more commonplace. The point is,

whatever the many differences between Bourdieu's position and Beck's on this, Beck's vision of consumption, far from depicting the erosion of class differences, seems to *re-establish* class as a primary division in reflexive modernity in a way altogether compatible with existing class theory.

Zygmunt Bauman: The Individualized Society

Given his reputation as a trenchant critic of the vast differentials and endemic misery produced by contemporary capitalist societies, Bauman may perhaps seem an unlikely inclusion in today's inventory of anti-class theorists. Yet the view that class plays little part in the maladies of the age of the consumer, first worked out in *Memories of Class* (1982), *Legislators and Interpreters* (1987) and *Freedom* (1988), is clear enough. In these early monographs, which laid the foundations for his later ideas, Bauman contended that, on the one hand, the demands of the working class have been successfully integrated into the corporatist capitalist system and, on the other, the steady decline of industrial workers through automation had induced rounds of economic restructuring and created a new system of division between permanent, full-time workers on the one hand and the new poor of casual workers and the unemployed on the other (Bauman, 1987: 178). Moreover, he declared, because capitalism no longer engages society as *producers* in its reproduction, centring work and class as the principle axes of struggle and identity, but as *consumers*, it is now the freedom to consume and to choose which symbols of self-identity are to be appropriated that constitute the central stratifying principle of society, with the new poor being seen through the lens of consumerism as 'flawed consumers'. Not only was the working class 'on the way out' (Bauman, 1987: 179), then, but viewing the world in terms of class at all now "clouds rather than clarifies vision" (Bauman, 1982: 193).

Bauman's conversion to postmodernism at the turn of the nineties, signalled by *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) and *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991), built upon these core themes. Expanding his theoretical vocabulary, individuals were now claimed to be engrossed in an unceasing and apparently unconstrained 'self-constitution' and 'self-assembly' of their identities, achieved through the adoption of 'symbolic tokens' of belonging (Bauman, 1992: 191–195; cf. 1991: 206). No longer was identity, as it was in the modern age, much like a pilgrimage –

committed to a single 'destination', solid, stable and progressive through time (e.g. the identity constructed out of one's lifelong job or career). Instead, in the era of postmodernity, it now centred around 'avoiding fixation and keeping the options open' (Bauman, 1995: 81), that is, the refusal of long-term commitments to any one place or vocation, personified not by the pilgrim but by the tourist, stroller, player or, if one is less fortunate, the vagabond (Bauman, 1995: 80–104). More recently still, however, Bauman has rebranded his thought, leaving behind his image as the 'prophet of postmodernity' (Smith, 1999) to become the herald of 'liquid modernity' (see especially Bauman, 2000).[25] In his latest batch of writings, particularly those on disembedding, individualization and the individualized society, Bauman regularly draws on and indeed moves much closer to Beck's position. But he provides no mere carbon copy of the latter's theory, for many of the themes that established him as an original diagnostician of the postmodern condition are retained and elaborated, whilst those he does borrow from Beck are taken in novel directions.

Essentially, Bauman's central proposition, modifying Beck's thesis, is that the condition of liquid modernity is characterised by a process of disembedding *without* re-embedding (Bauman, 2001: 41–56, 140–52; cf. 2000: 32–7). Modernity, he argues, has always been characterised by disembedding – that is, the 'socially sanctioned' (Bauman, 2000: 32) deracination of individuals "from the plot in which they germinated and from which they sprouted" (in Gane, 2004: 32). Yet this was always promptly followed by a process of *re-embedding* in which individuals had to actively forge their self-identification with one of the 'beds' (broadly equivalent to a collectivity) ready to subsequently house them. When feudal estates were replaced by classes in the transition to capitalism, for example, individuals were uprooted from their ascribed position and forced to re-identify with a social class by

> actively conforming to emerging class-bound social types and models of conduct, [by] imitating, following the pattern, 'acculturating', not falling out of step, not deviating from the norm...classes, unlike estates, had to be 'joined', and the membership had to be continuously renewed, reconfirmed and tested in day-by-day conduct (Bauman, 2001: 145).

---

[25] Interestingly, in a recent interview Bauman rejected the term 'reflexive modernity' associated with Beck and (less so) Giddens, condemning it for "projecting our own (professional thinkers') cognitive uncertainty on the world, or reforging quite real professional puzzlement into imaginary popular prudence – whereas that world out there is marked by the fading and wilting of the art of reflection..." (Gane, 2004: 18).

Once formed, however, class membership

> tended to become as solid, unalterable and resistant to individual manipulation as the premodern assignment to the estate. Class and gender hung heavily over the individual range of choices; to escape their constraint was not much easier than challenging one's place in the 'divine chain of beings'. If not in theory, then at least for *practical* intents and purposes, class and gender looked uncannily like 'facts of nature' and the task left to most self-assertive individuals was to 'fit in' into the allocated niche through behaving as its established residents did (Bauman, 2001: 145).

Moreover, class membership was by no means freely chosen but, instead, dependent upon access to material resources. Those endowed with fewer resources had fewer options of self-assertion and identification open to them, but, Bauman (2001: 46) argues, their deprivations 'added up' and 'congealed' into collective, class interests whilst their ineffectuality as individuals was compensated through the engagement in communal, class-orientated action:

> People endowed with fewer resources, and thus with less choice, had to compensate for their individual weaknesses by the 'power of numbers' – by closing ranks and engaging in collective action. As Claus Offe has pointed out, collective, class-oriented action came to those lower down on the social ladder as 'naturally' and 'matter-of-factly' as the individual pursuit of their life goals came to their employers (Bauman, 2001: 46).

In liquid modernity, however, where social bonds and conditions of action cannot, as in the past, keep their shape for long, and where jobs for life have evaporated according to the demands of the evermore dominant market, individualization has assumed a modified form: individuals continue to be disembedded and compelled to take their identity as a task rather than a given, but *no longer are there any firm beds waiting to accommodate their self-identification.* Instead, individuals must remain chronically disembedded, on the move, searching out and choosing their flexible identities as they go from the vast array of options available, all the while feeling incomplete, insecure and unfulfilled. As Bauman (2000: 33–4; cf. 2001: 146) puts it:

> No 'beds' are furnished for 're-embedding', and such beds as might be postulated and pursued prove fragile and often vanish before the work of 're-embedding' is complete. There are rather 'musical chairs' of various sizes and styles as well as of changing numbers and positions, which prompt men and women to be constantly on the move and promise no 'fulfilment', no rest and no satisfaction of 'arriving', of reaching the final destination, where one can disarm, relax, and stop worrying.

In other words, it is not only "the individual *placements* in society, but the *places* to which the individuals may gain access and in which they may wish to settle" that are now 'melting fast', and this affects all equally, "unskilled and skilled, uneducated and educated, work-shy and hard working alike" (Bauman, 2001: 146). The 'problem of identity' for agents is thus no longer "how to obtain the identities

of their choice and how to have them recognized by people around" or "how to find a place inside a solid frame of social class or category", as it was in the preceding epoch, "but *which* identity to choose and how to keep alert and vigilant so that *another* choice can be made in case the previously chosen identity is withdrawn from the market or stripped of its seductive powers" (Bauman, 2001: 147). Accordingly, the idea of a 'whole life project' is no longer desirable; instead, a "flexible identity, a constant readiness to change and the ability to change at short notice, and an absence of commitments of the 'till death do us part' style" have become not only attractive options but prerequisites for survival (Bauman, 2002: 35–6; cf. 2007a: 4). Of course, Bauman (2001: 50) adds, this implies there is a greater freedom for an 'ever growing number of men and women' to experiment with their identity and self-assert in liquid modernity, realised in the consumer market, but the necessary accompaniment is an unprecedented level of the underside of freedom – insecurity.

A corollary of all this, Bauman argues, is that problems generated by social organization or, more specifically, by deregulated markets and extraterritorial capital, have come to be seen as personal failings and responsibilities that must be dealt with individually.[26] For example, if people

> ...stay unemployed, it is because they failed to learn the skills of gaining an interview, or because they did not try hard enough to find a job or because they are, purely and simply, work-shy; if they are not sure about their career prospects and agonize about their future, it is because they are not good enough at winning friends and influencing people and failed to learn and master, as they should have done, the arts of self-expression and impressing the others (Bauman, 2001: 47).

Personal troubles, to deploy C. Wright Mills' (1970) phraseology, may appear similar but are no longer considered to be connected to public issues or collective interests, like those of class, and in fact the company and advice of others assumes the form of little more than a reassurance that 'fighting the troubles *alone* is what all the others do daily' (Bauman, 2001: 48; see also Bauman, 1999). In Bauman's (2004a: 35) words, capital and labour "no longer seem to offer a common frame inside which variegated social deprivations and injustices can (let alone are bound to) blend, congeal and solidify into a programme for change". Instead individuals are cast as autonomous, responsible individuals *de jure*, even if they remain, as they do in liquid modernity, far from autonomous individuals *de facto*. To secure

---

[26] Purging Giddens' phrase of its positive connotations, Bauman often describes this as a supplanting of politics with 'life politics' (see especially Bauman, 2002).

the latter, ironically, requires collective work (Bauman, 1999: 7), and this can only be achieved through a revitalisation of the *agora*, that is, the space where private and public issues meet and mutually translate.

Despite all this, however, issues of stratification, polarisation and inequality have never disappeared from Bauman's work. Whether conceived in terms of the freedom to consume and experiment with one's identity versus exclusion as 'flawed consumers' and bearers of unshakeable, stigmatising identities (Bauman, 1998a, 2004a: 38), in terms of freedom to move around the globe at will ('tourists') versus either those who *have* to move because of the inhospitality of the world ('vagabonds') or those who *can not* move for lack of resources (Bauman, 1998b), or simply in terms of a polarisation of wealth, income and life chances (Bauman, 2001: 115), there are, in Bauman's vision of society, always winners and losers. In fact, the latter are, in their function of 'offsetting the otherwise repelling and revolting effects of the consumer's life lived in the shadow of perpetual uncertainty' by reminding the former of what may befall them if things go awry (Bauman, 2001: 116), crucial to the reproduction of liquid modern social order, whilst the 'winners' constitute not adversaries against which the 'losers' shall struggle until the 'final *dénouement*', as Marx put it, but the idols they yearn to become (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 118). However, because of Bauman's frequent appeal to the differences in economic resources in defining whether individuals are winners or losers, some have argued that despite his rhetoric of fluidity and his rejection of class as an axis of inequality, his ideas on the stratification of freedom are in fact nothing but a theorisation of rigid *class* differences (Gane, 2001a, 2001b). But Bauman has replied to this charge, emphatically arguing that not only do the losers stand outside of any class hierarchy, thereby 'eroding the class-based order of society' itself (2007b: 123), but more importantly 'the two actual, feared or desired social conditions of freedom and un-freedom' are *not 'class-ascribed'* (in Gane, 2004: 34, some punctuation removed). Instead, he claims,

> ...realistic prospects for *each and every* resident of a liquid modern society. None of the currently privileged and enjoyable situations is guaranteed to last, whilst most of the currently handicapped and resented positions can be in principle renegotiated using the rules of the liquid modern game. There is, accordingly, a mixture of hope and fear in every

> heart, spread over the while spectrum of the emergent planetary stratification (in Gane, 2004: 34–35, some punctuation removed).[27]

Bauman rarely states it this baldly, but in a society where 'structures that limit individual choices' no longer 'keep their shape for long' (2007a: 1), where individuals are granted a new freedom to 'annul' and 'disable' the constraints imposed by the past so that 'what one was yesterday will no longer bar the possibility of becoming someone totally different today' (2007b: 104), and where 'assignment to "waste" becomes everybody's potential prospect' rather than 'a misery confined to a relatively small part of the population' (2005: 32) because endemic flexibility and insecurity in the world of work mean that 'everyone is potentially redundant or replaceable' and 'every position, however elevated and powerful it may seem now, is in the long run precarious' and its privileges 'fragile and under threat' (2001: 52), the logical result, he holds, is that class divisions are 'cancelled' (2005: 101).[5]

Critical Comments

Bauman's perspective bristles with insights into the deleterious operations and effects of consumer markets, the flexibilisation of work patterns and, even if it is no longer held to fit the mould of class, the plight of the poorer denizens of liquid modernity. Nevertheless, as with Beck and Giddens, his argument suffers from a multitude of deficiencies and areas of ambivalence that seriously undermine what he has to say. Some of these are relatively minor and need not be explored in any depth here – for example, his abstract, generalising style, his questionable characterisation of the transition to classes at the dawn of capitalism and his failure to clarify, like Beck, the *mechanisms* or *causes* of both disembedding and the loss of 'beds' in liquid modernity beyond the rule of the deregulated market. Others, however, are rather more substantial and, as such, require rather more attention.

Perhaps the most immediately apparent problem is Bauman's ambivalence and contradiction on the characterisation of *freedom* in liquid modern societies. As seen above, the general thrust of his argument would seem to be that the lack of solid beds in which to be re-embedded has allowed a new level of freedom and

---

[27] Hence, and when added to all that has already been said, Beilharz's (2000: 32) assertion that Bauman's is not "a frame of interpretation within which we encounter the 'end of class'" seems somewhat misplaced.

autonomy for an 'ever growing number' of people – class and other such 'beds', after all, no longer 'hang heavily over the individual range of choices' as they once did. This new found freedom, this 'emancipation from constraints' (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 103) or 'being free of chains', is, Bauman adds, 'indispensable for decent human life' (in Gane, 2004: 32), though so too is security, a casualty of the increase in freedom that can only be rescued and restored alongside it through a decoupling of earning entitlement from earning capacity (Bauman, 1998a, 1999). However, Bauman then seems to *utterly contradict* this conception of freedom when he goes on to contend, like Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/1997) half a century earlier, that, in fact, the freedom on offer in liquid modern consumer society is a *false freedom*; that the new form of 'privatised individuality' so prevalent today 'means, essentially, *unfreedom*' (Bauman, 1999: 63). No longer are the majority of the populace deemed to have attained something 'indispensable for decent human life': *de facto* freedom and autonomy – the ability to "gain control over [one's] fate and make the choices [one] truly desire[s]" (Bauman, 2000: 39) that looks uncannily like the 'emancipation from constraints' achieved more or less across the board above – now remains a distant reality and *de jure* autonomy – autonomy by right – all the bulk of the populace have. Then again, Bauman is hardly consistent on the *de jure*/*de facto* dualism either. In some places, for example, he claims that only a collective translation of private troubles into public issues will suffice to make *de facto* autonomy a reality for most individuals (e.g. Bauman, 1999), yet, elsewhere, we are told that the passage to *de facto* autonomy, though littered with obstructions and difficult to sustain, *is* achievable by individuals, especially if they are endowed with money (Bauman, 2005: 23ff). In fact, his model of the stratification of freedom is, it seems, measured in terms of *de facto* freedom – it would be senseless to describe the elite as 'privileged', as he often does, if this was not the case – with the elite free to pick and choose their identities and travel at will at the top, the immobile and stigmatised at the bottom, and *most of us struggling to balance freedom and security in the middle*,

> never sure how long our freedom to choose what we desire and renounce what we resent will last, or whether we will be able to keep the position we currently enjoy for as long as we would find it comfortable and desirable to hold it (Bauman, 2004a: 38).

It may be insecure, but now the majority in the middle *do* have more than *de jure* freedom after all.

This leads us to consider a second area of difficulty in Bauman's perspective, namely his take on the *composition of the new stratification order of liquid modernity*. It is obvious that, most of the time, Bauman envisages this order in terms of a polarised dichotomy between the winners and losers, seduced and repressed, tourists and vagabonds (see e.g. Bauman, 1987: chaps 10 and 11; 1998b: chap 4; Gane, 2004: 23ff). This is a powerful image, no doubt, but one that suffers from at least two problems. First of all, who exactly constitutes the *minority* and who the *majority* in the polarisation varies considerably across Bauman's writings. In some places, for instance, the 'losers' – the 'new poor', 'flawed consumers' or 'underclass' – are seen very much as the minority (Bauman, 1998a), counterposed to John Kenneth Galbraith's ever freer 'contented majority' of consumers (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 154). Elsewhere, however, the dividing line of the polarisation is suddenly said to have 'moved up the hierarchy' in liquid modernity, with the elite of extraterritorial global actors at one end and, at the other, the 'great majority' for whom 'effective therapy' (apparently higher education) against the afflictions of liquid modernity has been lifted 'beyond reach' (Bauman, 2004b: 14; cf. Gane, 2004: 23ff). In yet other places, though much more rarely, the dichotomy is, as indicated above, thrown out completely and most are said to reside in the middle. Such inconsistency, especially when added to the oscillations on freedom, makes it difficult to take any one of his positions seriously – who might now be judged a winner and who a loser may change dramatically over the page, so to speak – and, ultimately, chips away at the credibility of Bauman's overall perspective.

Secondly, it has to be said that Bauman's tendency to draw a single dividing line between winners and losers in liquid modernity is incredibly simplistic and detached from the intricacies of daily life, bunching together in each camp a myriad of heterogeneous actors and failing to recognise any internal modes of division and differentiation (cf. Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst, 2005b: 205). Doubtless such a binary view of society stems from Bauman's Marxist roots – he often depicts the global elite/localised masses division of today as an outgrowth of the capital-labour relation (e.g. Bauman, 2001: 25; Gane, 2004: 26; cf. Bauman, 1987: chap 11), and even, in some places, still refers to the elite as (extraterritorial)

capital.[28] But an undifferentiated binary division loses its justification when the Marxist categories are jettisoned. After all, there is no necessary nexus between Bauman's winners and losers like there is between Marx's bourgeoisie and proletariat, no relation of exploiter and exploited, no sense that each group depends on the other for its existence yet stands utterly opposed to it on the plane of interests to the extent that the ensuing struggle between the two will inevitably result in the dramatic conclusion of history's dialectic – especially in those instances where the winners are held to be the consuming majority rather than the elite minority. Having said that, even Marx was faithful to the complexities of the social world in a way that Bauman clearly is not, recognising the existence of multiple class 'fractions', as Poulantzas (1978) called them, in his more detailed analyses (e.g. the distinction between industrial capitalists and 'money-capitalists' in volume three of *Capital* – Marx, 1959: chap XXIII), as are the more sophisticated Marxist writers on class today (e.g. Wright, 2005b: 15ff).

Evoking Bauman's Marxist background raises a further, basic aspect of his position: he has, in complete contrast to Beck, a *very particular conception of class* and, thus, *what it takes to kill it off*. Only when labour ceased to provide a meaningful frame for action (Bauman, 2004a: 34–5; cf. 1982), that is, and when capital *qua* capital – "money which serves first and foremost to turn out more money" – rather than simply income and wealth ceased to confer a position of advantage and dominance (Bauman, 1998a: 31), did the concept of class pass away in Bauman's eyes. Now this is all fine and well as a case against Marxism, but such claims would hardly perturb a neo-Weberian, for example, for whom the elements Bauman cites are irrelevant to the measurement and substantiation of classes.[29] As Goldthorpe and Marshall argue – explicitly taking in their crosshairs Bauman and other ex-Marxists "who, having lost faith in the Marxist class analysis that once commanded their allegiance, or at least sympathy, now find evident difficulty in envisioning any other kind" – demolishing the Marxist project scarcely provides "the quietus of class analysis *tout court*" (1992: 381–2), for "[v]arious objections that may be powerfully raised against" Marxist class analysis – the lack of class-based collective action, the inadequacy of exploitation as a concept, the poverty of

---

[28] One commentator explicitly dubs Bauman a post-Marxist, arguing that Marx has disappeared into Bauman's work 'like labour into the product' (Beilharz, 2000: 49).
[29] Or, as we shall see in the next chapter, a Bourdieusian.

historicism, and so forth – "simply do not apply" to the version of class analysis they champion (1992: 393). All that is needed to demonstrate the 'promising future of class analysis' is, for them, empirical evidence that an agent's position in employment relations impacts on their life chances, social identity and social values in some way – something they feel they have no problem producing.

Perhaps with all this in mind Bauman's statement above in response to Nicholas Gane that whilst freedom and unfreedom are indeed delegated by material wealth they are by no means ascribed according to classes in liquid modernity can be seen in a new light – there is, after all, 'nothing Marxist' about such a position (Gane, 2004: 27). Yet there is more to this crucial statement, one of the most explicit rebuttals of class as a meaningful concept in Bauman's recent work, than that, and, when examined further, it reveals itself as a major source of serious error. On the one hand, Bauman makes the point that, given the intensified insecurity and flexibilisation of employment across the occupational spectrum, 'none of the privileged positions is bound to last' (in Gane, 2004: 35). This kind of statement, highlighting the shift in employment culture under neo-liberal capitalism toward incessant redundancy, downsizing, streamlining and so on in both the private and the public sector, is relatively commonplace in social science today, with versions propounded by both Beck and Giddens, as witnessed above, but also by others such as Richard Sennett (1998) and Bourdieu (1998a) – two thinkers with whom Bauman professes intellectual affinity. It has not, however, been without its challengers. Goldthorpe and McKnight (2005), for example, use statistical analysis based on Goldthorpe's class schema to demonstrate that the experience of frequent and long-term unemployment, despite claims to the contrary, remains a misfortune visited predominantly upon the working class, particularly those at the lower end of this category, not least, they argue, because of the form of employment contract, that is, the 'spot contract' carrying little expectation of continuity, supposedly defining their class membership. The measurement of class and proffered explanation aside, Goldthorpe and McKnight's argument provides an effective reminder that Bauman's – and of course Beck's and Giddens' – statement cannot, despite its general currency, be accepted as a truism.

On the other hand, Bauman also claims more overtly than either Beck or Giddens that the *reverse* of this scenario also holds: that the 'currently handicapped and resented positions can be in principle renegotiated using the rules of the liquid

modern game' (in Gane, 2004: 35). It is not entirely clear whether Bauman is actually referring to the prospect of upwards mobility here or just the ability to 'renegotiate' one's identity using consumer products, but either way it is perhaps one of the most contradictory and superficial comments in his entire *oeuvre*. It goes against all that he has said on the predicament of the immobile or vagabond, stigmatised poor in liquid modernity, described throughout his work as permanently excluded (Bauman, 2004b: 78; 2007a: 69) or made permanently redundant by the global economy (Bauman, 1999: 175), unable and not allowed to shed their 'stereotyping, humiliating, dehumanizing, stigmatizing identities' (Bauman, 2004a: 38) and pushed only 'deeper into the precipice of indignity' (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 154). Furthermore, the appeal to the 'rules of the liquid modern game' seems a little out of place with all that he has said before on the 'falling apart' of any 'hard and fast rules' in liquid modernity (Bauman, 2001: 11), adding weight to the suspicion that the statement is little more than an *ad hoc* response to a well-targeted question with no firm reasoning behind it.

Conclusion

The positions of Giddens, Beck and Bauman on the demise of class have now been given the clarificatory and critical analysis hitherto sorely missing in class theory. The precise character of their claims and the conceptual clothing in which they are swaddled have been unpacked, and, importantly, the several problem areas that plague each theory and gnaw at their credibility have been exposed and explored. These were, to sum up, Giddens' damaging inconsistency on the exact status of class in late modernity and the wider theoretical deficiencies in his conceptualisation of motivation and ontological security this revealed, Beck's incessant ambivalence on both the nature of individualization and the concept of class as well as his flawed reasoning on the mechanisms at work in propelling individualization, and, lastly, Bauman's conflicting views on the nature and existence of freedom and on the composition of the stratification order in liquid modernity, added to the somewhat contradictory and superficial reasoning behind his boldest statement on the irrelevance of class.

These critical points demonstrate that the theories of individualization and reflexivity cannot be accepted as they stand: they are, as conceptual totalities,

unsound and replete with untenable particularities – Giddens' notion of ontological security and the idea of 'renegotiation' so dear to Bauman, for example. Yet theoretical critique of the type presented here is not, on its own, enough to refute the theories of individualization and reflexivity outright, for there remain many themes running through them which, when extricated from the conceptual problems highlighted in the foregoing, might yet manifest themselves in the social world. In other words, the specific theorisations may be deeply flawed, but the overall *essence* of their diagnosis might still hold water. Whether agents increasingly are or see themselves as atomised, self-governing individuals with full responsibility for their actions and no ties to collective frames of meaning, whether some form of 'biographical decision-making' has become more prevalent and assumed a more 'reflexive' nature, however that might be defined, than once was the case, and whether inequalities, identities, lifestyle choices and political orientations have been set afloat from the class docks must thus be answered by means of a dialogue with the social world itself in the form of empirical work. However, before embarking on empirical scrutinization it is necessary to clarify what exactly constitutes the concept at the heart of the study – class – and, subsequently, to engage in another round of theoretical critique. This is the task of the next chapter.

4. Fine-Tuning the Bourdieusian Theory of Class

Class is not exactly an under-theorised phenomenon. As Erik Olin Wright's (2005a) recent collection indicates, a whole gamut of perspectives envisioning the concept in starkly contrasting ways currently exists, ranging from those still finding inspiration in the writings of the classics to those seeking to push beyond them in fresh directions. As chapter two documented, however, there is one standpoint in this assortment enjoying particularly frequent adoption and discussion in both the UK and the US at present: that forwarded by the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. As we saw, a good portion of this popularity stems from his inclusion of cultural processes in the definition of class, heightening its resonance with the so-called 'cultural turn' in sociology (see especially Devine and Savage, 2005). But Bourdieu's theory, as I intend to show, bears fundamental insights and advances over alternative conceptual schemes far beyond this aspect of his work and, importantly, can be used to counter and reformulate many of the arguments of Beck, Giddens and Bauman without completely rejecting them. His concepts have, however, received intense critical scrutiny. Once the main pillars of his approach have been outlined, therefore, a central aim of this chapter is to consider some critical points as they bear on the focus and methodology of the present study, defending Bourdieu against misreadings but also, more importantly, bolstering his ideas where undeveloped facets have been flagged by drawing on their roots in and converges with phenomenological philosophy and social theory.

The Bourdieusian Theory of Class

Social Space

The best entry point to Bourdieu's theory is his substitute for conventional models of the class structure in terms of hierarchical strata: the 'social space' (Figure 1). Essentially, this is a space in which all agents are plotted according to three axes or dimensions (Bourdieu, 1984: 114). The first of these, running along a

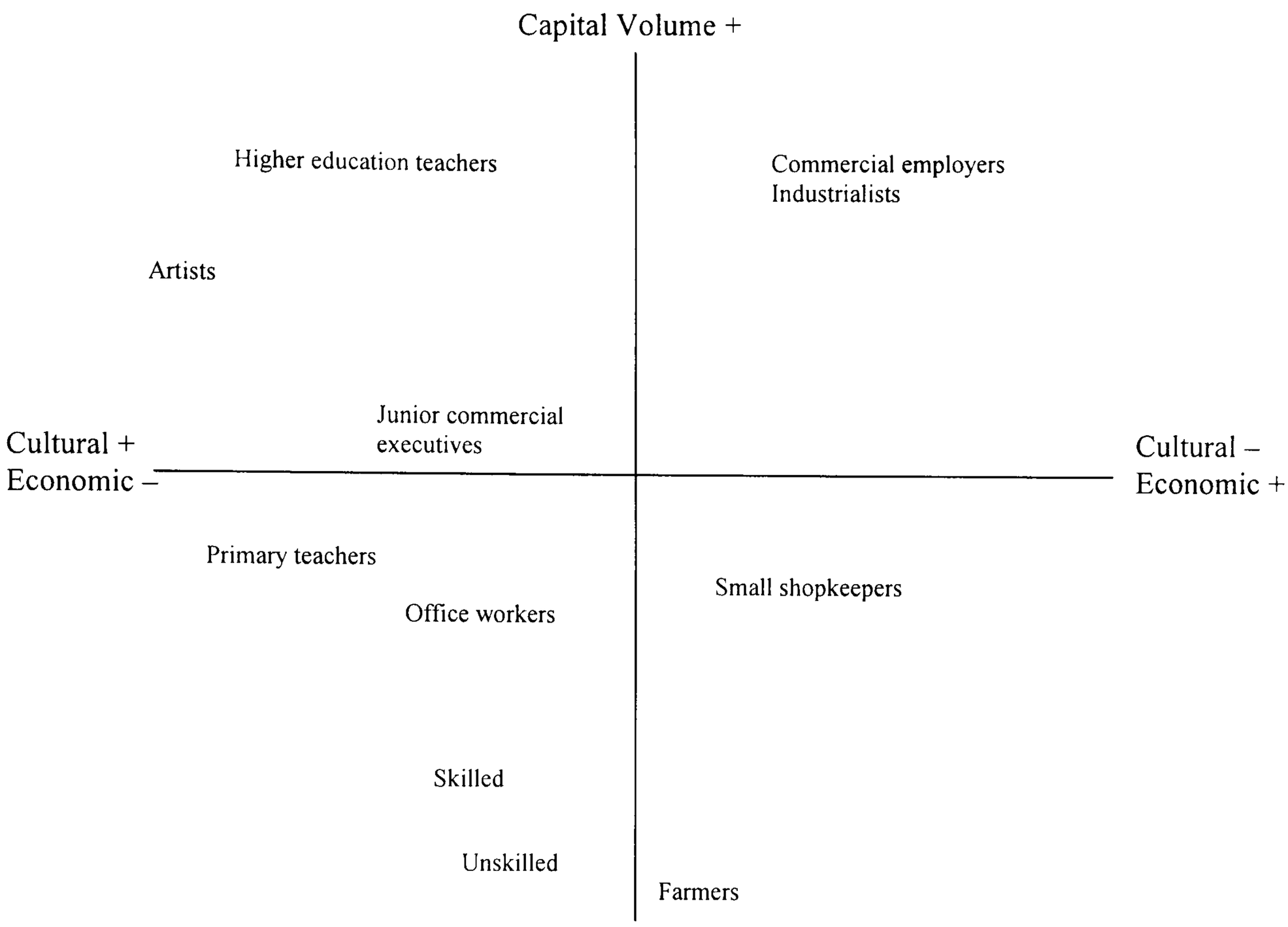

Figure 1: The social space, with some occupations plotted for illustration (based on Bourdieu, 1984: 128–9; 1998b: 5. The third dimension, trajectory, is not represented pictorially here).

vertical axis, is the overall amount of capital that the individual holds, including *economic* capital in the form of wealth and property, *cultural* capital, that is, signifiers of cultural competencies existing in embodied ('intelligence', cultural knowledge), objectified (cultural goods and items such as artworks) and institutionalised (educational qualifications) forms, and finally *social* capital, understood as resources based on personal networks and associations with certain names or titles (see especially Bourdieu, 1997a).[30] A fourth capital, symbolic capital, is the form taken by all other capitals when they are (mis)perceived as legitimate. Secondly, and importantly, agents are differentiated along a horizontal axis according to the composition of their capital – i.e. whether it is predominantly economic (as is the case for large industrialists) or cultural (such as for higher education teachers). This serves to subsume cultural differences usually analysed under the separate heading of status into the definition of class, increasing the

[30] Note that these particular capitals need not be the most salient in structuring social space; it is just that they are in contemporary capitalist societies. In state socialist societies Bourdieu (1998b: 14–18) identified 'political capital' as of central import instead of economic capital.

explanatory power of the concept whilst, as Sayer (2005: 77) notes, bringing it closer to lay experiences of class which tend not to differentiate it from status. It also introduces the phenomenon, otherwise smothered by one-dimensional class schemes, of horizontal or 'transverse' mobility based on the conversion of capitals (e.g. through monetary investment in education producing cultural capital) alongside vertical mobility based on accumulation (Bourdieu, 1984: 131). The third dimension is the individual's trajectory through social space over time as their volume and composition of capital evolves.

Three points need to be made before moving on. First of all, and most generally, the idea of social space yields a 'relational' view of class in which each position derives its meaning from its relations to others – distance, proximity, above, below, between and so on – within the totality, with these distances and relations translating into real *social* distances and relations.[31] This is opposed principally to what Bourdieu calls a 'substantialist' view of class in which the meaning of each position is rooted in the substantial properties (practices, behaviours and attitudes) associated with it, but it also stands in opposition to the relationalism commonly claimed for Marx and Weber (e.g. by Wright, 1979) insofar as it is not concrete *relationships* of production or in the market that are constitutive of class, as the two patriarchs of class theory have it, but social positions defined *relative to one other* in terms of volume and composition of capital. A crucial corollary of this is that the axes defining social space are continuous or gradational, meaning that, unlike for Marx and his followers or Goldthorpe, there are no hard and fast boundaries between classes, though since agents tend to form clusters in the different regions of social space they can be separated out as classes for analytical purposes. As Bourdieu (1987: 13) puts it:

> The boundaries between theoretical classes which scientific investigation allows us to construct on the basis of a plurality of criteria are similar, to use a metaphor of Rapoport's, to the boundaries of a cloud or forest. These boundaries can thus be conceived of as lines or as imaginary planes, such that the density (of the trees, or of the water vapour) is higher on the one side and lower on the other, or above a certain values on one side and below it on another. (In fact, a more appropriate image would be that of a flame whose edges are in constant movement, oscillating around a line or surface.)

---

[31] As the language used here probably betrays, this definition of class owes much to the structuralist tradition (for an acknowledgement of this debt see particularly Bourdieu, 1968), but it also draws on P. F. Strawson's philosophy of space and Ernst Cassirer's (1923) historical analysis of the transition from Aristotelian substantialism to relationalism (or 'functionalism') in the natural sciences.

Thus sidestepped are the stale debates that raged between neo-Marxists and others over the 'real' boundaries of social classes.

Secondly, it should be made clear that the social space is not, strictly speaking, an occupational structure, as Weininger (2005) implies, but a structure in which *all* agents are plotted – to limit it to the former is to unnecessarily eliminate the unemployed, the retired and housewives/husbands, all possessors of capital that could be positioned at any point in social space, from analysis in the same way as the 'employment aggregate' (Crompton, 1998) class schemes of Goldthorpe and Wright.[32] Bourdieu himself is not always consistent on this, and indeed sometimes refers to the space of 'posts' (especially in his early work with Luc Boltanski – Bourdieu and Boltanski, 1981), but his usual argument is that occupations, insofar as they require and perpetuate a certain amount and structure of capital, are generally convenient and economical *proxies for* or *indicators of* agents' positions (e.g. Bourdieu, 1987: 4). Occupations thus act as 'signposts' marking out the structure of social space, but nevertheless the social space and the agents' positions within it exist independently of occupations and consequently the jobless need not be neglected so long as their capital stocks are known.

Lastly, it seems necessary to respond to Beck's contention, registered in the last chapter, that Bourdieu is ill-equipped to deal with globalisation by noting that the concepts of social space and capital, whilst indeed remaining pitched at the level of the nation-state, by no means preclude consideration of global processes such as information flows, the imperialistic spread of neo-liberalism – a target of scolding criticism in Bourdieu's later years (Bourdieu, 1998a) – or, Beck's main concern, immigration. In fact, as regards the last of these it should be remembered that whether immigrants thrive or barely survive in the receiving country is shaped by the level of capital valued there that they hold. Those with little in the way of economic and recognised cultural resources, for example, will, as Bourdieu (1984: 108) noted in *Distinction*, come to occupy the lowest positions in social space and be subject to all the consequences that brings, whereas those who come equipped

---

[32] This argument also runs counter to Lovell's (2000, 2004) contention, seemingly based on a partial reading of *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu, 2001), that Bourdieu conceptualizes women not as capital-accumulating subjects in social space but as merely objects accruing capital for men, with only the latter positioned in social space. Not only did the survey acting as the empirical foundation for the social space constructed in *Distinction* question both men and women, but throughout that book there are a number of passages in which Bourdieu discusses the capital of women and their distribution in social space (on charwomen, for example, see Bourdieu, 1984: 108).

with ample stores of recognised or convertible capital will have an altogether different experience. Furthermore, the fact that some immigrants and asylum seekers may, as Beck suggests, be well-educated and respected citizens in their home nation but bottom of the pile in the receiving one is often due to the fact that their educational credentials (cultural capital) are not recognised as legitimate by the new system (i.e. turned into symbolic capital) and thus fail to secure them appropriate jobs (generating economic capital) (for an interesting first-hand account see Amirzada, 2006).[33]

Conditions of Existence and Habitus

The social space, according to Bourdieu, is constructed in such a way as to reveal the maximal differences and similarities between people. This is because those in neighbouring positions within it, by virtue of their capital possession, share similar 'conditions of existence' and conditionings which, in turn, produce within them similar habitus, that is, a complex of durable cognitive and corporeal dispositions, propensities, and schemes of perception and appreciation that manifest themselves in tastes and lifestyles. By 'conditions of existence' Bourdieu generally means the agent's relative distance from material necessity and the experiences this generates, with those in the upper regions of social space, possessing plentiful stocks of capital, being subject to an overall distance from necessity whilst those in the lower sections, holding less capital, are somewhat closer to its demands and urgencies. Through the practical adaptation to frequently experienced situations the objective probabilities of 'access to goods, services and powers' inscribed in these conditions are then – making a 'virtue of necessity' as Bourdieu often likes to say – transformed into the dispositions, schemes of appreciation and subjective aspirations of the habitus (Bourdieu, 2000a: 136; 1990a: 60). Thus *Distinction* documents how on the one hand the dominant class's (or bourgeoisie's) distance from necessity results in a privileging of 'form over function' and 'manner over matter' not only in the assessment of art but in the choice of food and clothes and in ways of walking and talking (Bourdieu, 1984: 5, 176–7), whilst on the other hand the dominated (or working) class's experience of

---

[33] For a more detailed critique of Beck's view on class and globalisation see Atkinson (2007b, 2007c).

the urgencies associated with less capital inculcates within them a propensity to give primacy to substance and functionality and, therefore, to make the 'choice of the necessary' (Bourdieu, 1984: chap. 7).

This adjustment takes the form of a subconscious bodily learning process in which the limits and regularities of the world are inscribed into the habitus as a practical evaluation of what goods, practices and aspirations are accessible and reasonable or, as Bourdieu puts it, as a 'feel for the game' and its forthcoming immediacies. In his words, 'we learn bodily' (2000a: 141) – with the body acting as a kind of 'living memory pad' and 'automaton' that 'leads the mind unconsciously along with it' (1990a: 68) – through 'practice rather than discourse' (1977: 87; cf. Wacquant, 2004b).[34] Much of this learning takes place in childhood, where 'familial manifestations of necessity' – 'forms of the division of labour between the sexes', 'household objects', 'modes of consumption', 'parent-child relations', 'domestic morality' and the like (Bourdieu, 1990a: 54; 1977: 78) – feed into the habitus via 'silent censures' (2000a: 167) and implicit and explicit pedagogy, often inculcating their effects through the experience of corporeal suffering and visceral emotion (2000a: 141), as well as through subconscious forms of mimesis and "sheer familiarization, in which the learner insensibly and unconsciously acquires the principles of an 'art' and an art of living..." (1990a: 74). For example, in households rich in cultural capital, the 'bourgeois culture and the bourgeois relation to culture' are acquired

> pre-verbally, by early immersion in a world of cultivated people, practices and objects. When a child grows up in a household in which music is not only listened to (on hi-fi or radio nowadays) but also performed (the 'musical mother' of bourgeois autobiography), and a fortiori when the child is introduced from an early age to a 'noble' instrument – especially the piano – the effect is at least to produce a more familiar relationship to music, which differs from the always somewhat distant, contemplative and verbose relation of those who have come to music through concerts or even only through records, in much the same way as the relation to painting of those who have discovered it belatedly, in the quasi-scholastic atmosphere of the museum, differs from the relation developed by those born into a world filled with art objects, familiar family property, amassed by successive generations, testifying to their wealth and good taste, and sometimes 'home-made' (like jam or embroidered linen). (Bourdieu, 1984: 75; see also Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper, 1991: chap. 4; Bourdieu, 1993a: chap. 13).

However, because the habitus is an 'open system of dispositions' constantly subject to new experiences well beyond infancy it is 'endlessly transformed' through a

---

[34] Originally Bourdieu inserted the caveat that learning took place through practice rather than discourse only where education had not been institutionalised, but since then, particularly in *Pascalian Meditations* and Wacquant's *Body and Soul*, the proposition seems to have been generalised.

dialectic with its environment (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133; Bourdieu, 1990b: 116; cf. 2000a; 161). On the other hand, agents are statistically bound to encounter similar, reinforcing situations as a result of their objective social conditions of existence (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133), and because so much is instilled in childhood and the habitus operates as the individual's lens through which to receive new experiences, it proves to be remarkably durable (Wacquant, 2005). Thus, for example, the habitus acquired in the family underlies the reception of the experiences of schooling, that is, the 'reception and assimilation of the pedagogic message', with the habitus as transformed by schooling going on to frame all subsequent experiences of culture, work and so on (Bourdieu, 1977: 87). On the basis of this process, Bourdieu often describes the habitus as the 'integration of past experiences' (1977: 83) or the 'active presence of the past' in the present (1990a: 56). Yet this does not imply a role for consciousness in the form of memory, for the body

> does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is 'learned by body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one *is* (Bourdieu, 1990a: 73).

It should be clear by now that the habitus is not an apparatus of the conscious, but instead functions "below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will" (Bourdieu, 1984: 466). The 'unchosen principle of all choices' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 61), it orients action and practices based not on consciousness or intentional aims but on the dispositions and inclinations built out of a practical, pre-reflective, corporeal sense of limits and realistic possibilities, leading agents, as captured in the phrase 'that's not for the likes of us', to refuse what they are refused in reality anyway (Bourdieu, 1977: 77). Bourdieu is, however, keen to stress that the habitus is not a mechanistic translation of objective structures into action, but a *generative* and *creative* capacity for thought and action within limits (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 122). More particularly, he claims, the habitus is predisposed to generate unconscious 'lines of action' or *strategies* aimed at maximising the agents' profits, whether they be economic or, more importantly, symbolic (Bourdieu, 2000a: 55; 1990a: 16; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 25). In practice this means that agents endeavour, without the intervention of consciousness, to improve or at least maintain their position in social space intra- and inter-generationally through

investing and converting their capital in a multitude of ways (Bourdieu, 1984: 125ff; cf. 1996a: 272ff), though in fact optimising strategies are diffused through all spheres of life – 'fields', in Bourdieu's terminology – including those, such as the academic or literary field, supposedly governed by disinterestedness (see Bourdieu, 1998b: chap. 4).

Symbolic Space

The next component of Bourdieu's theory of class is the notion that the practices and consumption tastes generated by the different habitus map into a relational space of their own – the 'space of lifestyles' or 'symbolic space' – homologous to the social space. Put another way, corresponding to the different sections of social space are different practices, goods and activities which, because of their homologous distribution, function as signifiers of one's position. For example, golf is plotted in the section of symbolic space which, if laid over the top of the social space, corresponds with the section occupied by industrialists and commercial employers, whilst football is plotted low down in the position homologous with that of manual workers.[35] More generally, practices and goods based on the dominant's taste for form, manner and distinction cluster in the upper regions of social space, bisected according to whether it takes the lavish form of those with predominantly economic capital (luxury cars, boats, expensive holidays) or the ascetic form of those with primarily cultural capital (reading, museums, classical music) (Bourdieu, 1984: 283ff), whilst the practices and goods associated with the dominated class's 'choice of the necessary' gather at the lower end. Between these two extremes the petite bourgeoisie display a lifestyle that betrays both their aspiration to the dominant style of life and their insufficient means and dispositions to appreciate it properly (e.g. listening to popularised opera).

This homology between the social space and the symbolic space yields within agents a practical 'class sense' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 140), that is, a relational sense of difference and similarity, of antipathy and sympathy, of 'one's place' and the place of others, and ultimately of distance and proximity in social space, based

---

[35] The position of each practice was worked out by Bourdieu through the statistical technique of correspondence analysis. This means that whilst, for example, football may also be a pastime of those in different section of social space, it is *statistically most closely associated* with manual workers. For a useful introduction to correspondence analysis see Phillips (1995).

on the 'reading' of the signifiers of symbolic space borne and performed by bodies (Bourdieu, 1984: 241–4, 467–7; 1987: 5; 1990b: 113–4; 1991a: 235; 1998b: 8–9; 2000a: 184; cf. Goffman, 1951). Two consequences follow from this. First of all, far from interaction being the source of all meaning, as the symbolic interactionists have it, the source of meaning of all interaction lies in the objective system of differences and similarities undergirding it (Bourdieu, 1990b: 127–8).[36] That is to say, the way in which agents behave and act towards one another – for example, being distant, aloof and standoffish, consciously monitoring and correcting one's behaviour in the presence of someone higher in social space, avoidance, friendliness or condescension (in the sense of strategies aimed at *denying* the social distance) – as well as who they are likely to interact and form relationships with, is structured by their 'practical intuition' of the homologies of the spaces (Bourdieu, 1987: 11; see also 1984: 472; 2000a: 184). Secondly, the agent's position in the spaces, its relation to – or rather its difference from – other positions and the agents' vision of their position, coupled with the specific effect of trajectory (Bourdieu, 1984: 111), furnishes them with their social identity (Bourdieu, 1991a: 234).

Ultimately, argues Bourdieu (1984: 175), the differences in symbolic space are organised around 'structures of opposition' homologous to the oppositions of the social space. The central opposition is between the rare or 'distinguished' practices of the dominant and the common and 'vulgar' practices of the dominated, which maps onto the central opposition in social space between those distant from necessity and those in proximity to it. This means that each practice and disposition in symbolic space, like the positions in social space, derives its meaning only from its relations to others – a practice can only be rare in opposition to the common – and that, therefore, the lifestyle of the dominated serves as a kind of 'negative foil' against which the dominant can define themselves (Bourdieu, 1984: 57). In contrast, the dominated for the most part perceive the bourgeois lifestyle as a *positive* reference point, that is, as legitimate. This is the principle of what Bourdieu (1998b: 9) refers to as 'symbolic violence': "dominated lifestyles are almost always perceived, even by those who live them, from the destructive and reductive point of

---

[36] Likewise, far from differential association being the principle basis for identifying classes, as the Cambridge School hold, the principle basis of differential association is the objective space of differences.

view of the dominant aesthetic". Of course, it should be added that the practices are not *intrinsically* distinguished or vulgar, and thus legitimate or not, but are only so when perceived through the principles of division – the ways of dividing up the social world in perception manifest most simply in binary classifications (high/low, fine/coarse, unique/common, strong/weak, etc.) – instilled into all agents' habitus as 'common sense', primarily through schooling, though with the particular spin given by the conditionings of the agent's conditions of existence (see Bourdieu, 1984: 466–84 and Appendix 4; 1990a: 139–40; 2000a: 172f). These principles of division are subject to perennial contestation and struggle (the 'symbolic struggle') at both the level of the individual (strategies of self-presentation and manipulation of one's self-image, but also insults) and the level of collectives (the naming and bringing into existence of groups – see below) (Bourdieu, 1990b: 134; 1991a: 239), but because the dominant have more resources, and thus monopoly over the education system, they have more power ('symbolic power') to impose their definition as the legitimate one (Bourdieu, 1990a: 139).

Class Making

So far, then, we have documented the existence of what Bourdieu calls 'theoretical classes', 'logical classes' or 'classes on paper', that is, classes of agents clustered in the social and symbolic spaces on the basis of similar conditions of existence, habitus and lifestyle practices. What has *not* been revealed, however, is the existence of 'real', practically mobilisable social groups or classes with predefined boundaries, definite criteria of membership or a 'unity of consciousness' or interests (Bourdieu, 1987: 7). In fact, such groups and their boundaries, including those posited by Marx, Wright, Goldthorpe and other class theorists, *never* exist ready made in reality – such an idea is an essentialist or substantialist one – but are instead *symbolic and discursive constructions* constituted in history through the symbolic and political struggles over the legitimate principle of vision and division of social space. In other words, the ideas and labels of 'middle class' and 'working class', 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat' are nothing more than *representations* of the divisions and differences of social space, building upon and raising to the discursive level the practical sense of difference and similarity, which, through specific political processes, have come to mobilise

individuals in social space and feed into their social identity and sense of belonging. The act of *naming* a class or group is the crucial first step in fostering the belief in its existence, followed by the establishment of organisations, symbols and representatives delegated the task of speaking for and about it, though of course which constructions gain credence depends not only on its concordance with the realties of social space but on the symbolic power of the constructor (Bourdieu, 1987: 8–9; 1991a: 239–51). Once in circulation, representations of social space can have real effects on the distributions within it, especially when they are recognised by the state in law, through, for example, various processes of exclusion and the credentialisation of occupations.[37]

Representations are firmly anchored in the social space and the differences it yields and do not, therefore, 'take place in a social void' or come *ex nihilo* (Bourdieu, 1998b: 12). Bourdieu's position is thus not one of relativist nominalism. Instead he follows a programme of what Wacquant (1989: 173) calls 'constructivist realism' that, first observing Durkheim's (1982) rationalist directive to push aside agents' subjective constructions and 'prenotions' and identify the existence of real structures independent of human thought that shape action and form a base for representations – the social space – then recognises the fact that this reality *is* perceived and constructed by agents, that the objective structures do not 'uniquely determine what social collectives emerge out of it and in what form' (Wacquant, 1991: 60), and that these constructions contribute to 'producing the facticity of the objective world' (Wacquant, 1989: 173; see further Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron, 1991). In other words, the social world is both 'real' in the sense of existing independent of our perception of it and 'constructed' in the sense that "its mechanisms function only as they are perceived and appreciated by agents through

---

[37] For concrete studies of this 'class making' process see Boltanski's (1984, 1987) work on the construction of 'cadres' as a class in France and Wacquant's (1991) discussion of Jurgen Kocka's analysis of the rise of the German *Angestellten*. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1980) can also, *mutatis mutandis*, be read as an account of the constitution of the 'working class' as a symbolic class, and, in fact, many studies examining the varying linguistic and social constructions of class as means of making sense of the social order in perception, its rhetorical uses in determinate historical contexts and its shifting representation in media and political discourse can be assimilated to Bourdieu's perspective (e.g. Furnbank, 1985; Marwick, 1990; Joyce, 1991; Cannadine, 1998), provided that the objective underpinnings furnished by social space are factored in as a corrective to the occasional lapses into subjectivism. For an application of Bourdieu-inspired approaches to the making of ethno-racial groups see Wacquant (1997) and Brubaker (2002). It should also be noted that it is only because they ignore Bourdieu's analysis of class making that Lamont (1992) and Sayer (2005) can accuse him of ignoring the role of national discourses or 'repertoires' in the experience of class.

schemes that are socially produced within, and homologous to, objective structures" (Wacquant, 1989: 174).

Proximity in social space by no means 'automatically engenders unity' (1998b: 11), guarantees symbolic and discursive articulation or gives rise to mobilised groups – as Wacquant (1991: 57) puts it, classes at the symbolic level are 'largely underdetermined at the structural level'. Part of the reason for this is the fact that the "the relative indeterminacy of the reality which offers itself to perception", the "plurality of principles of vision and division available at any given moment" as a result of past and present symbolic struggles and the specific twist given by the individual's position in social space as they produce their classifications of the social world to meet the exigencies and experiences of their daily lives (Bourdieu, 1987: 10–11) mean that the divisions of social space can, according to Bourdieu, be perceived, constructed, represented and acted upon by agents in different ways – including in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, occupation, community and even in terms of the explicit absence of social classes. Nevertheless, it is harder to draw together and mobilise as a practical group agents distant in social space, and when this is done on the grounds of, for example, nationalism, ethnicity or gender there are social and cultural fissures liable to result in fractures (Bourdieu, 1991a: 232–3; 1998b: 11; cf. 2001: 93).

The separation of theoretical classes from symbolic classes is one of the most refreshing aspects of Bourdieu's perspective and, as Weininger (2005: 116–7) notes, leaves him adequately equipped to recognise processes usually associated with the demise of class – pitching them at the level of symbolic and discursive construction – whilst continuing to uphold the significance and analytical value of theoretical classes. Thus the decline of traditional working-class identities and solidarities, the fragmentation of their communal heartlands and the demise of socialist politics are all documented at length in the interviews of *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1999), as well as in Charlesworth's (2000) broadly Bourdieusian study of de-industrialised Rotherham, without implying that the distributions and clusterings of social space, the similar conditions of existence and lifestyle practices or the practical sense of proximity and distance have altered significantly.

Some Defences and Developments

Like most influential theoretical positions, Bourdieu's has attracted sustained critical attention over the years. Much of this has, unfortunately, been polemical in nature or fallen victim to Bourdieu's greatest bugbears – misunderstanding, misreading and decontextualisation (see e.g. Bourdieu, 1993b, 1997b, 1999). Others, however, whilst still failing to hit their target head on, have succeeded in spotlighting areas in which his perspective could indeed benefit from further attention. Taken together, both forms of appraisal spawn not only a need to defend the overall position outlined above by delving further into the depths of Bourdieu's thought and clearing up misunderstandings, but also a requirement to heed Wacquant's exhortation that if we are to think *with* Bourdieu then we must think *beyond* or even *against* him on some issues (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: xiv), the latter endeavour being achieved, I want to argue, by exploiting the links and converges between Bourdieu's theory and phenomenology.[38] The breadth of criticism, of course, matches the breadth of Bourdieu's influence, and so the areas explored in the following are only those that have direct bearing on the substantive topic of interest here – class and its impact on action and thought via the habitus – and the method of research to be undertaken – qualitative interviews possessing a biographical dimension. Thus, far from being concerned with the scholastic search for an 'integrated paradigm' (Ritzer, 1980: 231–63) implied in many contributions to abstract debates over the dualisms of social theory, the themes pursued and developments suggested remain tied to the real problems of social inquiry.

Individuation: the Structured Lifeworld

The first criticism to be scrutinised relates to what Lau (2004: 373) describes as a 'well-known' problem in Bourdieu's theory and is forwarded most rigorously by social psychologist Bernard Lahire (2003), a foremost critic of Bourdieu in France attempting to found a 'sociology at the level of the individual' (see also Cicourel, 1993; Reay, 2004; Silva, 2006). This is the treatment of individuation, that is, of the multitude of differences *between* individuals, within

---

[38] On the relationship between Bourdieu and the various versions of phenomenology see Ostrow (1981), Dreyfus and Rabinow (1993), Charlesworth (2000), Crossley (2001), Marcoulatos (2001), Robbins (2002), Throop and Murphy (2002), Lau (2004), Myles (2004) and Endress (2005).

the general categorisation of relative distance from necessity, that make them – their habitus – idiosyncratic. This might seem a strange point to respond to given that the focus here is class and, therefore, generality. Yet Lahire's point clearly has ramifications for qualitative studies of class which, equipped with Bourdieu's conceptual tools, seek to dissect individual lives and lay bare the multitudinous social forces refracted through concrete events, persons and places that have and continue to fashion them whilst being able to handle conceptually the individuality of their circumstances and habitus that may in extreme cases, such as the capital-poor individual with a love for fine art, engender 'dissonance' from established homologies between social and symbolic space (see Silva, 2006; Bennett, 2007).

The thrust of Lahire's criticism is that Bourdieu's notion of the habitus and its constitutive dispositions built out of distance from necessity, whilst offering promise, capitalise on the supposed homogeneity of habitus between individuals in sectors of social space and, as a result, are unable to adequately handle the heterogeneity and subtlety of human lives revealed in studies conducted at the level of concrete individuals (cf. Cicourel, 1993). The best he can muster, argues Lahire, is a reduction of the individual habitus to the collection of positions occupied in different fields – an approach applied in his study of Heidegger, where that thinker's habitus is designated a product of his positions in social space, the academic field and the field of philosophy (Bourdieu, 1991b: 47; cf. Bourdieu, 1975, cited in Lahire, 2003: 334–5). This is all very well, Lahire (2003: 335) comments, but it just cannot grasp the impact on Heidegger's habitus and dispositions, and thus actions, of a whole array of social factors such as the different schools he attended, his family, his friendships, his political contacts and so on – and for the less celebrated members of society, one might conjecture, their work, their neighbourhood, particular social and personal events and the like.

All this demonstrates a rather simplistic understanding of Bourdieu on individuation. For one thing, the focus on membership in different fields – which Bourdieu (2000b: 302) dubs an individual's 'social surface' – allows a greater grasp of the factors shaping individuals, such as their specific workplace or their particular schooling, than Lahire makes out. After all, in one of his later studies Bourdieu (2005: 69ff) suggested that firms, at least those with a large workforce, *can themselves be fields* generating different positions and thus experiences for their employees, putting flesh on his earlier assertion that sociologists must account

for 'occupational effects' on agents' habitus, that is, 'the effects of the nature of work, of the occupational milieu, with its cultural and organizational specificities' (Bourdieu, 1987: 4). Similarly in the case of schooling, in the methodological addendum to *The Weight of the World* – a study very much concerned with concrete individuals – Bourdieu stresses that to "grasp the essential of each [person's] *idiosyncrasy* and all the singular complexity of [their] actions and reactions" sociologists must uncover the objective structures past and present expressed in the actual academic establishments through which they traverse and which are themselves organised with other academic institutions in a relational field (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1999: 618).

Furthermore, the 'social surface' is only one aspect of Bourdieu's approach. Elsewhere, whilst rightly stressing the homogeneity of habitus between individuals in the same region of social space, he also writes that

> The singular habitus of members of the same class are united in a relationship of homology, that is, of diversity within homogeneity reflecting the diversity within homogeneity characteristic of their social conditions of production. Each individual system of dispositions is a structural variant of the others, expressing the singularity of its position within the class and its trajectory. 'Personal style', the particular stamp marking all the products of the same habitus, whether practices or works, is never more than a deviation in relation to the style of a period or class...

He continues: "The principle of the differences between individual habitus lies in the singularity of their social trajectories, to which there correspond series of chronologically ordered determinations that are irreducible to one another." No two members of the same class will have had 'the same experiences in the same order', he argues, but "it is certain that each member of the same class is more likely than any member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for members of that class", and so whilst the habitus brings about a 'unique integration' of experience it remains an integration of "the experiences statistically common to members of the same class" (Bourdieu, 1990a: 60).

However, probing into Bourdieu's perspective on individuation to counter Lahire's superficial reading reveals that the former's thought on this issue is not entirely unproblematic or fully developed for detailed qualitative research.[39] On the one hand there is a sense in which the idea of the social surface yields a *fragmented* depiction of the agent, with individuals being abstracted from the total experiential

---

[39] Bourdieu's most qualitative study (excluding his early ethnography in Algeria), *The Weight of the World*, is actually relatively light on theoretical explication and thus skirts the issues explored here.

context of their lives as they live them in concrete time and space to trace the effects of each field without then recombining these multiple field effects to grasp the whole. Indeed, at its most extreme it leads Bourdieu (2000b: 299–300) to imply that a single person should be conceived and analysed as *multiple social agents*, unified only by a personal name and biological individuality, as if experiences and actions could be neatly compartmentalised. On the other hand, it remains unclear how some elements of the individual's experiential and situational milieu which clearly imprint upon the dispositions, expectations, sense of what is 'normal' and schemes of perception of the habitus (such as their particular locality, certain events, consociates and so on),[40] whilst remaining generally configured by material and cultural conditions of existence, are graspable with Bourdieu's conceptual tools.

Take, for instance, Cannadine's (1998: 171–80) suggestive analysis of the origins of Margaret Thatcher's incoherent visions of the social world – in Bourdieusian parlance, the subjective perceptions of her habitus, including her consumerist individualism and (or despite) her acute 'class sense'. Cannadine makes much of the experiences of Thatcher's petite-bourgeois upbringing – her antipathy towards the aristocracy and the working class on account of being 'in the middle' (something Bourdieu would no doubt corroborate), serving in her father's shop and seeing people as individual consumers regardless of their occupation – but also the experiences granted by the *particularities of her home town*, Grantham, with its lack of heavy industry and traditional working class, its celebration of hierarchical relations in civic events and so on. That these experiences fed into Thatcher's vision of the world is, so far as Cannadine is concerned, indisputable, but just how they would be grasped through the social surface is less certain. Bourdieu's account of differential experiences creating diversity within homogeneity could perhaps offer a starting point, but remains tied principally to the idea of trajectory and is thus of little use in this case. As another example, consider the passage from *Distinction* cited above, in the exposition of conditions of existence, on the practical familiarisation with music or art in early life. This account, highlighting the structuring of formative experience by possession of

---

[40] On the impact of the locality cf. Reay and Lucey (2000); on the impact of consociates on the habitus see Crossley (2004: 64; cf. 2006). So far as biographical events go, the best we get from Bourdieu is a claim that they should be conceived as moves or investments in the social space or fields (Bourdieu, 1996b: 258; 2000b: 302) – a claim that applies to the *production* but not *reception* of events, that is, to events understood as actions undertaken by the individual but not those seen as experiences feeding into the habitus as the generative principle of action.

cultural capital and the latter's reproduction, is highly persuasive, yet the experience and incorporation into the habitus of the *specific* worlds of art or music is not fully accounted for by position in social space (both require the same level of economic and cultural capital), participation in fields (what field is the young child a member of?) or trajectory, only its general conditions of possibility. A similar example is offered, though in a different conceptual vocabulary, by Margaret Archer (2000: 285): though position in social space may indicate a likely 'set of the role array' (or a 'field of possibles' in Bourdieu's terminology) for a future career – for example, semi-skilled or skilled manual work – only a more differentiated account of residual factors such as 'available information, role models and work experience' would allow a fuller understanding of precisely 'why Johnny becomes a fireman and Tommy a policeman'.

So, in order to deepen Bourdieu's framework, heighten its powers in handling individuation and prepare it for qualitative analysis, I propose to introduce and develop the phenomenological notion of the *lifeworld*, not as employed by Habermas, Husserl or even the great many phenomenologists, such as Aron Gurwitsch (1970: 50), who equate it with "the cultural world of a certain socio-historical group", but as defined specifically by Schutz (1970a: 320, emphasis added) as "[t]he total sphere of experiences of an *individual* which is circumscribed by the objects, persons, and events encountered in the pursuit of the pragmatic objectives of living".[41] The lifeworld, on this definition, is the agent's practical, everyday world consisting of the domains encountered in their routine 'time-space paths' (see Giddens, 1984: 110–6, 132–9) – their home and family, school or work, neighbourhood and so on – and containing a certain type and particular manifestation of objects (tools, clothes, furnishings), people (friends, family, work

---

[41] Schutz also often gives the impression that the lifeworld exists at the collective level, but the definition here – in fact that of Helmut Wagner, the editor of the volume in which it appears in the glossary – is the single best encapsulation of the more 'individualistic' way in which he and others sometimes use the term and which I want to develop it to complement Bourdieu (on the lifeworld as 'my world' cf. Schutz, 1970b: 134ff). It should also be pointed out that Schutz (and Husserl) sometimes operate with an 'idealist' conception of the lifeworld in which it is depicted as constituted purely in consciousness at the expense of the material (see Wolff, 1979: 522). The definition of the lifeworld used here, however, is taken to designate a reciprocal interweaving of consciousness (broadly defined) and experience with 'external', material, spatio-temporal conditions. This is also in line with Merleau-Ponty on the lifeworld (or being-in-the-world) and takes insight from the Lund school of time-geography, Giddens on recurrent time-space paths and, of course, Bourdieu, who claimed that the social order exists twice – once in minds as schemes of perception (the natural attitude), but also in objective social structures that pattern conditions of existence (Bourdieu, 1996a: 1–6).

colleagues) and events. The agent is born into this world, experiencing it from the outset as not only 'already constituted' (Schutz, 1962: 133) but, because of recurrent exposure, as what is 'normal', familiar and taken for granted (becoming what Bourdieu, following Husserl, calls 'doxa'). There are phenomena that are only peripherally part of one's lifeworld because of their infrequent occurrence and there are phenomena that, because they are never or rarely encountered, are not a part of the lifeworld at all, yet that which is distant in physical space can, because of telecommunications and the media, be brought into the lifeworld in the form of 'secondary' or 'mediated' experience (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 44).[42]

Now importantly the lifeworld – its objects, occupants and so on – is, as the quote from Schutz above suggests, both the agent's milieu and conduit of everyday experience, and because it is particular to the agent so too is the flow of experience that builds into their biography and habitus. However, to avoid getting drawn into the predominantly descriptive and anti-genetic enterprise of phenomenology we must turn back to Bourdieu and argue that *the experiences of the lifeworld are structured by, amongst other things,*[43] *one's position in social space*, such that whilst the actual *articulation* of experience is unique to the individual it remains patterned by the material and cultural conditions of existence associated with their relational position.[44] So, two agents close in social space have individual lifeworlds insofar as they attended different schools, have different occupations and workplaces, live in different neighbourhoods and have different family and friends – not just because of their membership of different fields – and thus have distinctive experiences, biographies and habitus, but because all these facets of the lifeworld are structured to some degree according to material conditions of

---

[42] Schutz and Luckmann here anticipated Giddens' (1991) focus on time-space distanciation and his own idea of 'mediated experience' in his treatment of globalisation, and can therefore accommodate many of the related themes explored by Thompson (1995).

[43] Chiefly, the structural forces at play in the institutions and fields in which the individual is positioned and through which they move, but also of course gender and ethnicity.

[44] Compare Bourdieu's (1977: 86) fleeting remarks on both the structuring of the 'physiognomy of social environments' by the 'dead ends', 'closed doors' and 'limited prospects' associated with particular conditions of existence (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 144 n96) and the 'immersion in a world of cultivated people, practices and objects' (Bourdieu, 1984: 75) characteristic of bourgeois socialisation, as well as his earlier definitions of conditions of existence as including 'dwelling place and the daily life associated with it' and 'environment and working conditions' – definitions broader than simply distance from necessity and suggestive of the lifeworld (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979: 12; 1990: 259; see also the passage building on a revealing quote from Husserl in Bourdieu, 1971: 205). A similar argument to that pursued here, but using Merleau-Ponty rather than Schutz, is presented in Bufton's (2003) analysis of the lifeworlds of working-class university students.

existence they and the experiences and habitus they generate display, to use Wittgenstein's (1952) phrase, 'family resemblances', that is to say, they are analogous or, as Bourdieu would say, 'homologous'. This can help explain, for example, the differences which lead one agent in the cultural section of the dominant class to pursue, be at ease with and be knowledgeable of music and another art – both agents' past and present lifeworlds involve a cultured upbringing and distance from necessity, but one may well be characterised by musicality (e.g. a musical parent, instruments and paraphernalia around the home), the other by all things artistic (most lifeworlds are, of course, more complex than this and full of contradictory elements which then play out in the habitus and patterns of action).

It should be noted that position in social space designates the material and cultural structuring of the lifeworld and typical experiences at any one time, not those that have flowed into the agent's habitus hitherto (unless their position has remained more or less static over time). So, Bourdieu's focus on trajectory, the temporal dimension, is of crucial importance, for it designates the past structuring of the lifeworld, and thus the past experiences, that have shaped the individual's habitus. The individual can remain in the same point of social space and thus face similar, reinforcing experiences over time, though the character of the lifeworld and experience inevitably changes in other respects and over time as one gets older, or they can move through social space with the accumulation or conversion of capital, changing the domains of and thus character of experience in the lifeworld, through 'gearing into it' with their own actions (see Schutz, 1970a: 318) or through the actions of others, including distant, 'abstract' others.

The Formation of the Habitus

The argument so far presupposes another slight modification of Bourdieu's perspective, or to be fair a drawing out of what he sometimes implies anyway (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133): rather than say the habitus is a product of adaptation to frequently experienced situations only we can state that, more in line with Husserl's (1973) use of the term, Merleau-Ponty (1962) on the presence of the past in the present and Schutz's concept of the stock of knowledge, the habitus – the lens for receiving and interpreting present experience – is in fact a product of the agent's past experience *in toto*, that is, an accumulation and sedimentation of all

the experiences and events that the agent has encountered in living out their biography (*Erfahrung*). However, though rare, extraordinary and non-routine events, occurrences and actions can often leave a significant and abiding imprint on the individual (see Schutz and Luckmann, 1989: 62–3; Wagner, 1973: 72ff), most of these experiences take place in the routine domains of their lifeworld and therefore reaffirm and solidify already existing sedimentations (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 124). Furthermore, because the lifeworld and the recurrent experiences it provides are, as argued above, shaped by material and cultural conditions of existence, the habitus of those in a sector of social space, whilst heterogeneous on account of the heterogeneity of events experienced in their unique biographies (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 123), can still be considered in Bourdieusian fashion as homogeneous and amenable to being grouped into a theoretical class. As Schutz and Luckmann (1989: 115–6) put it:

> [There are] contemporaries whom I do not know personally at all, but who can be assumed to have had in their life experiences that were the same or similar to mine. They speak the same language, they grew up with parents whose attitudes were stamped in a similar way…as my parents' attitudes, they went to the same sorts of schools, they practice professions with which I am familiar…[But there are also] contemporaries who speak a different language from mine, who went to completely different schools or to no schools at all, who heard different fairy tales or read different books, whose life was shaped by different local events…whose parents belong to a different social stratum [or sector of social space] from mine…

This obviously begs the question of how exactly these experiences are translated into the dispositions and interpretive schemes of the habitus. A complex issue for sure, and one that Bourdieu has done much to answer convincingly. However, whilst sedimentation and disposition formation do indeed take place through many of the 'practical' processes he identifies – the 'sheer familiarisation' with the objects, events and likelihoods of the lifeworld through recurrent experience which builds into the agent's sense of what is 'normal' and 'reasonable', a pre-symbolic 'imitative acceptance' of observed modes of conduct (Bourdieu's 'mimesis') (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 270) and so on – critics are right to note his tendency to understate the extent to which some learning can involve or indeed require varying levels of conscious participation – from phenomena simply becoming themes to consciousness, however transient, fuzzy and ill-formed, through to some form of understanding (Sayer, 2005: 28). Not only is this slightly contradictory – pedagogy and inculcation, both acknowledged by Bourdieu as key methods in forming the habitus, presuppose conscious or cognitive internalisation

(Lau, 2004: 374) – but, as Sayer (2005: 26–7) and Schutz and Luckmann (1973: 106; 1989: 28) before him point out, even the most 'bodily' or 'practical' of knowledge from dancing and boxing to swimming and walking were once problematic and, to some extent, consciously thematised.

Bourdieu is, however, absolutely right to emphasise the disproportionate weight of childhood experiences in the formation of the habitus, though his account needs respecifying, albeit sketchily, in light of the argument so far. The child, we can say, is born into a lifeworld shaped by the social, economic and cultural capital of its parents or guardians and surrounded from the start by certain objects (piano, artworks, sports cars), events (museum visits or football matches, including on television) and people (associates of the guardians, but also others such as home music teachers or social workers) with which, as Bourdieu argues in the passage quoted earlier, it becomes familiar as 'normal' and unquestionable (though not necessarily comfortable and liked) through recurrent experience. Alongside this familiarisation the socialisation provided by the guardians in the lifeworld is obviously crucial and, once again, though articulated uniquely dependent on their unique habitus, structured by the amount of capital they hold. Thus the implicit and explicit pedagogy of what is 'for us' and what is not ('we can't afford it'), but also the broader differences in socialisation documented by a number of researchers between the use of reason, elaboration and extra-curricular activities by parents with high cultural and economic capital, thereby reproducing in the child embodied cultural capital, and the more authoritarian and autonomy-granting, but low capital-yielding, approach of those with less (Bernstein, 1971; Walkerdine and Lucy, 1989; Lawler, 2000; Lareau, 2003; cf. Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, on the inculcation of 'symbolic' and 'practical mastery'). This socialisation lays the ground for and runs tandem with the child's experience of institutionalised education which then, as discussed above, underlies all subsequent experiences and action. Here, masses of knowledge and the dominant constructions of the world (the 'pedagogic message') are run through the filter of the extant habitus and the sense of difference and similarity is developed, whilst all the while the processes described by Bourdieu and other sociologists of education through which capital begets capital take place.

'Mundane Consciousness' and Habitus as Stock of Knowledge

So much for the formation of the habitus. But what about the concept itself? As one of the central columns in Bourdieu's theoretical edifice the habitus has been subject to a multitude of criticisms from all sides of the sociological spectrum, from structuralists such as Levi-Strauss condemning it as a vehicle for a 'spontaneist' philosophy of action (see Bourdieu, 1990b: 10, 61–2) to Jeffrey Alexander's (1995: 136) infamous description of the term as a 'Trojan horse for determinism'. The specific issue to be addressed here, however, is one raised by Alexander (1995: 143ff) and noted by an increasing number of other commentators (e.g. Margolis, 1999; Crossley, 2001; Jenkins, 2002; Lau, 2004; Reay, 2004; Sayer, 2005): the extent to which Bourdieu claims that action based on the habitus, including strategic action, is 'bodily' and undertaken without consciousness or intention. In Alexander's (1995: 144) terms, Bourdieu practices a crude 'sociologized biologism' which "allows him to ignore the complexities and subjectivities that the category 'self' implies", 'eliminates the significance of motive' (139), expunges reflexivity and intentionality from social life (146) and, ultimately, as McLennan (1998: 84) summarises it, eradicates any sense of a 'thinking, feeling self'.[45] Similarly, Jenkins (2002: 93), another scathing, though slightly more sympathetic critic of Bourdieu, claims that the focus on the primacy of the corporeal effectively reduces conscious activity to "an epiphenomenon, almost an *effect*, of the body", whilst Reay (2004: 437) and Sayer (2005: 29) argue that Bourdieu is in danger of denying the 'life of the mind' in others. Other critics (e.g. Crossley, 2001) recognise that Bourdieu does not deny that there *is* conscious or 'rational' action, but decry the fact that he generally sees it as an *exception,* separate from the habitus and surfacing only in times of crisis such as when the habitus fails to fit with a situation (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1990b: 108; 2000a: 64).

Bourdieu supplies plenty of ammunition for this kind of criticism: his descriptions of the habitus do underscore the bodily dimension, especially in later works such as *Pascalian Meditations*, and can give the impression that talk of intentions or consciousness should be banished from sociology altogether. Thus we

---

[45] Though they do not meet head-on the exact issue discussed here, see McLennan (1998), Potter (2000), Crossley (2001) and especially Wacquant (2001) for effective responses to Alexander that reveal his attack to be based on gross misreadings, misunderstanding and polemical rather than intellectual intentions.

are told that the habitus grants 'spontaneity without consciousness or will' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 56; cf. 2000a: 137) and 'intentionless improvisation' (1977: 79), with the underlying practical sense being nothing other than social necessity 'converted into motor schemes and bodily automatisms' (1990a: 69) which 'lead the mind unconsciously along with [them]' (1990a: 68). '[S]tates of the body', he puts it elsewhere, give rise to 'states of mind' by 'awaken[ing] ready-made feelings and experiences' or 'recall[ing] associated thoughts and feelings' (1984: 474; 1990a: 69). Even the schemes of perception or 'cognitive structures' are 'dispositions of the body' rather than 'forms of consciousness' (2000a: 176). Furthermore, he argues, action takes place 'without a conscious aiming at ends' (1977: 72) and is guided not by projects and plans, that is, the future, but by the past as embodied in dispositions (1977: 72) or, if anything, by the protentive sense of the upcoming immediacies furnished by the 'feel for the game' (1990b: 12; 2000a: chap. 6; 2005: 214). As such, 'thought objects', reasons and motives should never be treated as the 'determining causes of practices' (1977: 21). At its most extreme there are, as Crossley (2001: 115) and Farnell (2000: 403) have noted, moments in Bourdieu's writing when the agent disappears from the formulation of action altogether and is effectively replaced by the habitus, with the latter, as in Freud's depiction of the id, ego and superego, being falsely attributed capacities (action, comprehension) only agents possess (cf. Giddens, 1984: 42). For example, adopting the anti-humanist idiom of structural Marxism, agents are said to be 'supports' of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977: 85) 'possessed by [it] more than they possess it' as it 'acts within them' to organise action (1977: 18), whilst it is the habitus rather than the subject that comprehends the similarities and differences of social space (2000a: 130) and possesses a margin of freedom (2005: 131).

The result of all this, it seems, is a model of action grossly at odds with the realities of the social world, especially the kind revealed in qualitative research, including that constituting the bulk of *The Weight of the World* (1999: esp. 580–89), where agents appear as thinking, intending, deliberating beings. Conscious and intentional (including, though not necessarily, 'rational') action, deliberation and even some form of reflexivity, Bourdieu's critics argue (e.g. Mouzelis, 1995: 112; Crossley, 2001: 117, 140–60; Jenkins, 2002: 97; Sayer, 2005: 27–30; Archer, 2007: 41–4; Elder-Vass, 2007), are simply much more of a routine feature of the human condition than he admits. However, these points often (though not always) miss the

point that Bourdieu, borrowing a phrase from Mao Tse-tung, is usually 'twisting the stick in the opposite direction', that is, playing up his propositions in reaction to academic orthodoxy. In fact, buried underneath the kind of assertions documented above is a much more subtle concept than that typically described by critics, one in which conscious intentions and 'rational' action, despite Bourdieu's usual disclaimers, are not antithetical to it at all, but rather *issue from it*. Thus his contention that agents' 'wills and intentions' depend on their positions in social space (Bourdieu, 1981: 308), his claim that the propensity to be 'rational' depends on one's habitus and particular conditions of existence (1990a: 64; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 124; cf. Bourdieu, 1979, 2000c, 2005), his assertion that the habitus informs 'all *thought* and action (including *thought of* action)' (1977: 18, emphasis added) and Wacquant's (2005b: 3) description of the habitus as 'cognitive and conative [a term usually associated with will and volition] schemata that inform...thoughts, feelings and conduct'. Indeed, Bourdieu's stress on the 'generative' capacities of the habitus should be read as a claim that the schemes of perception and dispositions of the habitus generate, alongside more automatic modes of conduct, *intentional* actions, with his refutation of 'conscious' or 'rational' action simply being a dismissal of the idea that agents – e.g. the working-class adolescent leaving school (perhaps one of the 'lads' in Willis, 1977) – fully consider and weigh up all options (work, college, university etc.) in formulating their intentions rather than a rejection of intentional action altogether (the working-class adolescent still thinks about and intends to get a job) (cf. Bourdieu, 2000a: 137–8). Perhaps to make this clearer and to separate it from scholastic visions of voluntaristic agents formulating action *ex nihilo*, the latter should be called, adapting a phrase from Sayer (2005: 29), 'mundane consciousness'.[46]

But mundane or not, so long as conscious activity and intentional action are based on the habitus do they not remain epiphenomena of the body? Not, I want to argue, if we depart slightly from Bourdieu's strict definition and interpret the habitus as being akin to what Schutz calls the 'subjective stock of knowledge' and its framing 'attitudes'. A number of convergences exist between the two theorists' concepts: for example, like the habitus the stock of knowledge and attitudes,

---

[46] I use the term consciousness and avoid Sayer's own idea of 'mundane reflexivity' in order to better separate it from the reflexivity of the well-trained social scientist according to Bourdieu and of the self-oriented agent in Beck and Giddens' work. I also have my doubts over Archer's (2003, 2007) characterisation of the 'internal conversation', the concept on which it is based.

according to Schutz, serve as the agent's 'scheme of interpretation' for making sense of the world and experience (Bourdieu's 'schemes of perception') (Schutz, 1964: 283; cf. 1972: 84), and both are products of sedimentations of multiple past experiences – practical and more consciously thematised – anchored in manifold situations and encounters which, as should be established by now, are shaped by the material and cultural conditions of existence characterising the agent's lifeworld. However, what Schutz makes explicit is that the stock of knowledge is *multilayered*, that is, inclusive of many different interpenetrating levels, from the more cognitive or declarative forms of knowledge gleaned from past experiences and 'at hand' from situation to situation in different degrees of clarity and coherence (which Bourdieu seems to downplay or see as separate from the habitus), through routinised modes of knowledge, conduct and skills (or 'know how' – Ryle, 1949) down to the most basic, habitual and bodily forms of knowledge so ingrained into agents that they no longer appear as elements of knowledge at all but are instead 'on hand' in all instances, that is, automatically implicated in situations and acts without the need to direct attention at them (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 105–11).[47] As Bourdieu would say, the latter are less something we *have* than that we *are*. This is even more the case for what Schutz calls 'attitudes', that is, the complex of 'inclinations to act' and propensities to 'steer toward certain goals and modes of conduct' (i.e. dispositions) combining skills, habitual knowledge and 'frames of mind' which articulate the stock of knowledge and underlie expectations and verbalisable forms of knowledge without themselves (usually) being reflectively grasped (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 215–23; 1989: 20–1).

Importantly, for Schutz the different levels of the stock of knowledge and the attitudes which frame it combine to give rise to a variety of forms of action, from consciously deliberated projects and long-term plans through habitual or routinised modes of conduct which 'unreel almost without the actor's participation

---

[47] In fact, in one of his earliest books, before he appropriated the term habitus and began to emphasise the corporeal, Bourdieu did explicitly argue that agents derive from their conditions of existence many different levels of knowledge: habits, skills, attitudes, cognitive knowledge, know-how, tastes and manners (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979: 17). Schutz's conception of the multilayered stock of knowledge can be seen to cover the different forms of knowledge variously named by others, such as discursive and practical consciousness for Giddens, though he downplays the bodily dimension too much and, as demonstrated in the last chapter, lacks an adequate conceptualisation of how these layers of consciousness mediate between formative experiences and action; or 'knowledge that' and 'knowledge how' for Ryle, Dewey and James, though the formative role of differentiated experience is better captured by Schutz and phenomenology.

and conscious planning' at all, the goals of which enter consciousness 'at most just briefly' (Schutz and Luckmann, 1989: 39, 27), right down to the 'completely autonomized' elements of action which Bourdieu puts under the label of hexis – ways of walking, standing and so on (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 108). Furthermore, more conscious or intentional action is seen as having two faces: one in which it is motivated by the future, by the actor's conscious projects or goals of varying time-scales and clarity which they can supply reasons or rationalisations for, that is, in which it is constructed 'in order to' do something; and one in which it is 'caused' (or 'generated') by the sedimented past experiences constituting the stock of knowledge and attitudes or, to use the preferred nomenclature, the habitus, that is, in which it is done 'because' of the prior experiences sedimented as dispositions, tastes and so on (Schutz, 1962: 69–72; 1964: 11–12; 1972: 86–96; Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 209–23; 1989: 19ff).[48] To put it more simply, action is often driven by conscious projects, but those projects are themselves *based on the past experiences of the agent* – sometimes particular sedimentations, sometimes the totality of sedimentations embodied in dispositions or giving rise to the sense of what is 'reasonable' or 'for us' – which are, of course, materially and culturally patterned. This is true even for action that is preceded by deliberation – a 'dramatic rehearsal in imagination of various competing possible lines of action', as Dewey (1922: 190) defines it – and even so-called 'rational' action: what is rehearsed, considered and weighed up, the ends valued and means considered, and the final choice or decision, are not separate from the interpretative schemes and dispositions of the situated habitus but *based on* them (cf. Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997: 34; Sayer, 2005: 27). The habitus thus remains the unchosen principle of choices, as Bourdieu would say, but those choices are infused with intentions and mundane consciousness and originate not from the body alone.

What, in all this, of the vexed notion of strategy, a concept closely tied to the habitus? Bourdieu's use of the term seems, as several commentators have noted (Alexander, 1995; Swartz, 1997; Crossley, 2001; Jenkins, 2002; Sayer, 2005),

---

[48] This distinction between 'in-order-to motives' and 'because motives', nowadays paid so little attention, rejects the age-old oppositions between reasons and causes of action and between free will and determinism. Some confusion is generated by Schutz's use of the term 'motive' though, which clashes with the distinction between 'motives' and 'causes' of action in post-Wittgensteinian philosophies of action (Bernstein, 1979: 162), but if the literal meaning of the term as 'a factor inducing a person to act in a particular way' (OED) is employed, this is not, as Richard Bernstein wishes to argue, a problem.

problematic, excessive and, like rational action theory, tautological insofar as practically any action can be reconstructed in retrospect as being a 'move' in an 'objectively economic' strategy that the agent herself has no idea about (Bourdieu, 1990b: 90). Yet the idea, notwithstanding Bourdieu's infelicitous use of it at times, is more nuanced than usually depicted. This is because strategies are aimed at maximising *symbolic* profit rather than economic profit, status or power *per se* – though these are misperceived as means of achieving symbolic profit – and in the end this equates to nothing other than the desire for social value, dignity, or recognition, to feel important and worthy, in whichever walks of life one finds oneself in (Bourdieu, 1990b: 196–8; 2000a: 240–5; Wacquant, 1998: 218). It would thus be foolhardy to claim that the concept has no theoretical mileage whatsoever. On the other hand its universality is still contestable, and so perhaps it would be better to argue that agents often possess a deep-seated and not necessarily verbalisable, calculative or competitive inclination, instilled via a complex combination of childhood socialisation and later experiences, for themselves or their offspring to 'do well' or 'better' or to conserve what they have through some of the methods described by Bourdieu, even in disinterested spheres of life, but that if action can be demonstrated not to be guided by this inclination then it is inappropriate to superimpose the language of strategy onto it. The existence and character of strategies would thus be more of an empirical question, as would their differential distribution amongst agents (cf. Lau, 2004: 378)

Subjectivity

As already mentioned, the habitus as interpreted above remains the agent's subjective scheme of perception and interpretation giving rise to principles of division and representations of difference. However, whilst the bulk of what Bourdieu has to say on this facet of the habitus – the existence of 'class sense', the discursive and symbolic articulation of difference and construction of class and other groups which builds on this, the fact that they are the products of the agent's position in social space and so on – is both highly illuminating and convincing, laying firm foundations for studying the subjective dimension of class, there is a sense in which his account is undeveloped and in need of some padding out, particularly in terms of the nature and genesis of the schemes and constructions.

Fortunately, Crossley (2001: 130–3), who also notes this deficiency, has already persuasively specified a way it can be remedied and further linked to the more phenomenological conceptualisation of the habitus forwarded above, though his discussion remains largely indicative and in need of connecting to Bourdieu's particular theorisations of class.

Drawing specifically on Husserl's (1977) analysis, but also chiming with Schutz's work on the same topic, Crossley suggests that the schemes of perception of the habitus can be conceived in terms of 'typifications' and 'pairings'.[49] He summarises these processes as follows:

> Typification entails the formation of habitual perceptual schemas which simplify complex perceptual input. In effect the uniqueness and particularity of each new moment of our experience is simplified by being subsumed into a general category or 'type'. Thus, even when we approach objects which, strictly speaking, we have never encountered before, we will see them in terms of the broader type to which they belong. Moreover, newly typed objects are 'paired' with objects of the same type which we have experienced in the past, and properties and qualities attributed to them accordingly (Crossley, 2001: 132).

Far from being conscious phenomena, typification and pairing occur automatically and 'without our participation', as Husserl (1973: 123) puts it, at the pre-reflexive or 'prepredicative' level – the child who encounters and understands scissors for the first time will thereafter simply perceive scissors *as* scissors at first glance without any 'explicit reproducing, comparing, [or] inferring' (Husserl, 1977: 111). Only when typification is problematic, such as when a perceived object is distant and we are struggling to 'make it out', does it move closer to consciousness. Furthermore, as should be readily apparent, the typifications and pairings comprising the scheme of perception are constituted out of the agent's past experiences and overlap greatly with the varying forms of knowledge and know-how described above (Crossley, 2001: 132), meaning that they too, like the habitus more generally, can be considered structured according to the material and cultural conditions characterising the agent's lifeworld. Finally, argues Crossley (2001: 133; cf. Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 233–5), language plays a crucial role as the objectifying vehicle of typifications and pairings, from furnishing individuals with the oppositional adjectives identified by Bourdieu to providing the names and descriptions of the most elaborated symbolic construction of class or another grouping.

---

[49] Wacquant also describes the subjective dimension of the habitus as 'definitions of the situation, typifications, interpretive procedures' (in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 12), but nowhere does Bourdieu corroborate this interpretation.

With the subjective side of the habitus thus refined we can start to put some new flesh on the bones of Bourdieu's framework. First of all, the 'reading' of the signs of symbolic space giving rise to 'class sense' can be conceived as a prepredicative attribution or recognition of types and pairings. That is to say, the practices and goods of symbolic space are associated, paired and typified with agents in certain sections of social space homologous with their position, such that when a 'sign' of symbolic space is perceived it triggers a prepredicative association of the bearer with a certain position in social space relative to the perceiver (rendered in terms of occupation, wealth, 'intelligence' and so on) and other practices as well as with linguistic descriptors ('posh', 'fancy', 'vulgar') and affective states (loathing, discomfort, fear). [50] However, the typifications constituting the scheme of perception are built out of multifarious experiences, often emanating from contradictory sources, and tailored toward practical purposes and considerations (such as insults or descriptions) (Bourdieu, 1987: 10). Bourdieu (1987: 10) is thus right to assert that they 'are never totally coherent or logical in the sense of logic' but instead 'necessarily involve a degree of loose-fitting', fuzziness and incoherence. This is even more the case when those perceived are either from the middle sections of social space where 'the indeterminacy and the fuzziness of the relationship between practices and positions are the greatest' and open to manipulation (Bourdieu, 1987: 12), or from a position distant in social space, outside of the agent's routine lifeworld, and thus grasped with more generalised criteria or by reference to representatives of that sector with which they are familiar (including those from the media) (Bourdieu, 1987: 10).

Moreover, though typifications remain structured by the symbolic space as an index of objective statistical associations and the determinate position the perceiving agent occupies within it, because the agent's subjective scheme of

---

[50] The other side to this is that others' expectations of an agent and their actions based upon them, such as discriminatory practices, shape the agent's lifeworld and build into their habitus, more deeply the more recurrently they are experienced (cf. Jenkins, 1996: 154–70; Crossley, 2001: 150ff). It should be noted at this point that some practices and objects, such as the Muslim hijab, are typified and paired according to ethnicity rather than position in social space, though these inevitably appear in combination with other practices, goods and modes of being which do signify the latter. Furthermore, some practices and goods – for example 'gangsta rap' music – are typified with and thus signify both ethnicity *and* position in social space at the same time (in this case black and dominated). Either way, discrimination based on the reading of ethnic or ethnically-flavoured signs (or for that matter skin colour), bound up with the symbolic and discursive construction of the ethnic 'group', impacts upon the agent's position in social space and their habitus in the way suggested. This applies *mutatis mutandis* to gender as well.

perception is constructed out of the practical exigencies and experiences characterising their lifeworld the signs recognised, the specific meaning they are given and their linguistic objectification are all particular to them. For this reason differences in social space are often grasped at a local level – between concrete individuals or, as in Southerton's (2002) study of class identification in Yate, between housing areas within a conurbation – or in terms that have had the greatest salience in the agent's experience (see Bourdieu, 1987: 10). Having said that, it is important to remember, in line with both Bourdieu and Schutz, that many linguistically objectified typifications and constructions are, as products of past symbolic struggles, appropriated 'ready made' by individuals – from parents during socialisation, but more importantly from agencies of symbolic power such as the school, the media and political discourse (the latter of which is mediated by the media: Bourdieu, 1998c; see also Bourdieu *et al.*, 1999: 620) – and applied to their circumstances. One need only think of the contemporary construction of 'chavs', 'metrosexuals' or, a little older now, 'yuppies', all of which are associated with certain clothes, goods and practices and figure in everyday discourse, but even the labels 'working class', 'bourgeois' and, more popular these days, 'middle England' fall within this bracket.

Individualization Revisited

Having outlined, defended and developed Bourdieu's position, the issue now is its precise consequences for the theories of individualization and reflexivity. To what extent can the claims of Beck, Giddens and Bauman now be refuted on conceptual grounds? On the other hand, what, if anything, can be salvaged from their work and reformulated in Bourdieusian terms as theses to be examined in the research? Given their particular visions of social change, each theorist must be re-examined in turn if we are to answer these questions effectively. First of all, however, it is worth reconsidering separately two themes common to all three individualization theorists as well as other detractors of class.

The first of these is the supposed flexibilisation of work and the generalisation of job insecurity across the board. It was noted in the last chapter that the purported consequences of this for class should be treated with caution, but, in light of the arguments developed above, it should also be pointed out that even if,

as Bourdieu (1998a) himself has claimed, insecurity were now to know no bounds, the *experience* of that insecurity as a part of the agent's lifeworld and how it feeds into them would differ according to their habitus, whilst their ability to *handle* job loss or job-shifting would depend on the resources (i.e. the capital) they possess and can mobilise to their advantage. In short job insecurity would, in all likelihood, remain inflected by class processes. The second issue, already touched on in the exposition of Bourdieu's position on 'class making', is the decline of collective class identities and the rise of other divisions in their place or the onset of atomisation. Far from spelling the end of class *per se*, from a Bourdieusian perspective these processes can be conceived as a decline of the *symbolic construction* of 'class' as a frame for articulating the differences of social space and mobilising agents with the rise of individualist political visions of the social world, particularly in the eighties, and the increased prominence of alternate constructions of difference such as ethnicity, nationality or 'social exclusion'. The disappearance of some of the symbols associated with discourses of 'class' – certain jobs, communities, ways of life and so on – with changing social conditions could also be an important factor in shaping perceptions and linguistic descriptions of the social world, though it must be made clear that this is only because of the *substantialist* mode of thought usually in operation amongst agents whereby what makes someone a member of a 'class' is the display of a particular combination of properties and practices with which it is typified. This must be separated from the *relational* definition of class of the analyst, where theoretical classes exist so long as differences – relative distances and directions – in social and symbolic space persist and manifest themselves in the *sense* of difference, no matter what the actual symbols homologous with each sector of social space may be or how they are discursively articulated.

Giddens

With those two general issues dealt with we can turn to the specific positions of the individualization theorists and, firstly, to Giddens. Much was made in the last chapter of Giddens' inability to link lifestyle choices to social positions via a theory of motivation in order to explain how the former contribute to stratification processes. If we adopt a Bourdieusian perspective, however, this

problem dissolves: the habitus formed out of the experiences of the agent's materially and culturally structured lifeworld is the wellspring of action and principle of lifestyles, and because the structuring of agents' lifeworlds depends on their position in social space their motivations and lifestyles would differ accordingly. The symbolic space into which practices map through homology then becomes the site of the 'symbolic struggle' over the relative legitimacy of the different 'arts of living' – only then would lifestyles be implicated in the production of social differentiation in the way suggested by Giddens. Yet this is not all, for adopting the framework outlined above also supplies effective remedies to some of the other difficulties plaguing Giddens' approach. The tension between voluntarism on the one hand and the depiction of lifestyle orientations as guiding behaviour on the other, for instance, evaporates. This is because 'lifestyle orientations' are, in fact, nothing other than the orientations furnished by the habitus in the form of schemes of perception, something agents cannot transcend to make choices *ex nihilo* as Giddens implies in his more voluntaristic turns. Further to this, there is no need for the concept of ontological security in explaining the 'routinized' character of social life, and so we can easily evade its apparent psychological determinism. Instead, routine is largely a product of the particular habitus, but also more generally of the practical, unquestioning relation the agent has to the world that is built into it.

If lifestyles and even identities – which, even if granted a temporal dimension, flow from the sense and vision of one's place in social space – are not a simple matter of choice by increasingly autonomous agents at all but based on the materially and culturally shaped habitus, does this mean they cannot be 'reflexive' in the way Giddens describes and that, therefore his theory should be dismissed outright? Not necessarily, for his overall position can, in fact, be reformulated along the following lines: due to what he describes as the decline of traditional modes of practice and globalisation, the lifeworlds of individuals have become suffused with new experiences and information on different ways of life and thus appear to offer new choices on how to live. Coupled with the pressures of consumerist individualism promulgated by the culture industries and political rhetoric in Britain over the last few decades, the propensity to 'reflexively' change and experiment with one's lifestyle choices *could then become incorporated in the habitus as an unreflexive disposition*, combining different levels of knowledge and

attitudes built out of these new lifeworld experiences, in a way similar to that suggested by theorists of the 'reflexive habitus' (e.g. Sweetman, 2003). Bourdieu's description of the new petite bourgeoisie, recounted in the last chapter whilst criticising Beck, supplies a clue as to how this might manifest itself. However, it is not hard to imagine that new experiences and information flows would be distributed remarkably unevenly into lifeworlds on the basis of, firstly, the latter's material and cultural structuring (e.g. access to the internet, association with cosmopolitan significant others) and, derivatively, the practices and pursuits issuing from the agent's habitus: which television channels and programmes they watch, what they look up on the internet, which newspapers and magazines they read and so on. Even if they do permeate the lifeworld, they would be interpreted according to the extant perceptual schemes of the habitus. Furthermore, it seems likely that not only would a certain amount of both economic and cultural capital be required to realise a fully 'reflexive' pursuit of different lifestyles[51] but also, because of this fact, the reflexive construction of one's lifestyle would for the most part be perceived through the lens of the habitus of those with less capital as 'not for the likes of us'. To put it in a nutshell, the reflexive habitus might well be a preserve largely of those more distant from necessity, with the dominated remaining rather more 'univorous' in their consumption patterns, even if, recalling the principle of symbolic violence, they recognise that reflexivity is a legitimate or desirable style of life.

Beck

If Giddens' particular take on the declining relevance of class can be reformulated in a more palatable conceptual language, what of Beck's thesis of individualization? This is perhaps less straightforward, for whilst the 'disembedding mechanisms' that form the explanatory heart of Beck's position – the expansion of education, new consumption pressures, geographical mobility, the flexibilisation of work and so on – could be conceived as forces radicalising the physiognomy of lifeworlds and the basic experiences they yield, producing more

---

[51] In a recent book Giddens (2007: 66) claims that lifestyle differences between classes are based not on 'financial constraints' (i.e. economic capital) but on different tastes, without recognising that different tastes are formed on the basis of the structuring of lifeworlds by economic capital.

'reflexive' agents compelled to make life choices to an unprecedented degree, the serious blindness to the way some of these mechanisms may be shot through with class processes themselves, and even in accord with a Bourdieusian approach to class, has already been documented in the last chapter. Nonetheless, the conclusion there was that if not the majority then at least some – namely those possessing ample stocks of cultural and economic capital – may indeed display some form of 'reflexivity' and, as with Giddens, this could be cleansed of its voluntaristic renderings, captured in hollow claims that individual volition is somehow more prevalent than before (Beck and Willms, 2004: 24), and recast as an unreflexive *disposition*, generated out of a particular combination of recurrent experiences, to consider and choose different options with reference to oneself, alter facets of one's biography and follow diverse paths through life in the way Sweetman (2003) suggests. If this is indeed the case, then not only is Beck, as Skeggs (2004) claims, depicting as universal a mode of behaviour restricted to the more privileged but, more importantly, class (in Bourdieu's definition) is not dead at all. And, of course, if Beck's thesis is to hold even this meagre amount of water it has to be shown that the underlying forces behind such 'reflexivity' are the disembedding processes he describes and not simply the distance from necessity the more privileged have long enjoyed.

Some of Beck's other claims, when run through a Bourdieusian conceptual filter, are rather more debatable. Take, for example, his hyperbolic declaration that positions in the social structure are characterised by transience, incessant movement and ambivalence, with inequality ultimately being distributed over the phases of an 'average work life' – a phrase that conceals vast differences between occupations (say Giddens' 'Apple Mac' workers compared with 'Big Mac' workers) – rather than between groups.[52] This should be contrasted with Bourdieu's assertion that movements in social space can only occur with the accumulation (or loss) or conversion of capital, which generally takes a specific amount of *labour* and thus *time* (Bourdieu, 1991a: 232), or the inflation and depreciation in value of particular forms of capital such as educational

[52] Urry's (2004: 9) claim in his eulogising introduction to a set of interviews with Beck that the idea that poverty is now distributed across the life course rather than groups is evidenced by the fact that middle-class students now experience poverty not only attempts to collapse real distances in social space but displays a gross insensitivity to the differential experience of higher education on the basis of capital stocks – something documented by Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) as well as more recent studies.

qualifications. This is not to say that, for example, jobs are not lost at higher reaches of social space, but only that those unfortunate enough to be made redundant do not instantly plummet down the hierarchy: they retain their capital (unless, in the case of economic capital – perhaps the least important compared to social or cultural capital in securing new employment – they are unemployed long-term, implying a distinct temporal dimension far removed from the erratic immediacy implied by Beck, though unlike those lower down in social space their stocks are often boosted by generous pay-outs) and thus, as already discussed, are better equipped to job-shift and to do so horizontally rather than downwards. They would also likely retain their dispositions and attitudes or, if the experience of job loss is recurrent, develop new ones – both positive (reflexivity) and negative (such as an inability to grasp the future – Bourdieu, 2000a: 234) – still distinct, on the whole, from those of the dominated.

Even more problematic is Beck's own definition of class (when one can be pinned down). Having failed to break with the substantialist logic of everyday thought that binds classes to particular practices and recognise the relational nature of class in which the actual practices are less important than the relations between them in symbolic space, a number of his arguments simply miss their target. For instance, his claim that social classes are "losing their distinctive traits, both in terms of their self understanding and in relation to other groups" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 39) and are thus 'no longer experienced' (Beck, 1992: 98; cf. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 36) can be reduced to little more than the much less threatening proposition that the *particular differences associated with 'class' as a symbolic construction are disappearing*: the old jobs, communities and practices which marked out in people's minds 'the working class' and 'the middle class' as popularly conceived. For whilst strictly speaking an empirical question, the idea that symbolic differences *per se* have disappeared, and with them the sense of difference and similarity based on the prepredicative association of perceived symbols with positions in social space, seems exceptionally hard to sustain. For example, whilst for Beck (1992: 95) the supposed 'democratisation' of car ownership and foreign vacations may signal the end of class, seeing as the working class are obviously defined by their domestic holidays and lack of a car, for a Bourdieusian the differences and relations *within* these 'democratised' practices would signify the continued existence of symbolically differentiated classes – the

'old banger' of the dominated class, or the 'souped-up' machines of younger, usually male members, versus the executive or sports car or four-wheel drive (the 'Chelsea tractor') of the dominant; package beach holidays in cheap destinations such as Spain for the dominated versus independently booked adventurous or 'cultural' holidays for the dominant, and so on. If such difference exists, whether or not encased in the language of social classes, then theoretical classes exist; conversely, to deny classes on this definition "means in the final analysis denying the existence of differences and principles of differentiation" (Bourdieu, 1998b: 12).

Bauman

Of all the positions on individualization, Bauman's is perhaps the easiest to assimilate to a Bourdieusian perspective. This is because, unlike the others, and notwithstanding his remarks on job insecurity and the 'negotiability' of positions in liquid modernity which can be responded to in the same way as Beck's assertions to the same effect, he continues to underscore the rigid stratification of society in terms of freedom, an emphasis that could be conceived as nothing other than an insistence on the *continued potency of the social space* – which, of course, maps the stratification of freedom from necessity – conveyed in a different conceptual terminology. Reinforcement for this view is provided by Bauman's (2004b: 14) stress on not just the continued influence of economic resources in shaping this hierarchy, but also educational qualifications, that is, the institutionalised form of cultural capital. His prevarications over the pertinent dividing line can then be seen as simply his own inconsistent imposition of principles of division on this space devoid of rigid dividing lines in reality depending on his purpose at hand.

But what of the idea of disembedding? Does this not imply the reconfiguration of experiences on a broad scale in the same way as Beck's thesis? The answer is no, for there is a key difference between the two theorists here, one which shifts Bauman closer towards Bourdieu's vision of the social world than Beck's. To put it simply, whilst the above reassessment of Beck's thesis reconceived disembedding as an alteration of objective determinants of experience feeding into the habitus and trajectories, for Bauman disembedding essentially refers to a *subjective* process whereby individuals can no longer identify with fixed groups but are instead forced to construct and revise their identities themselves

(once again the reflexive habitus suggests itself). So, on his view the decline of capital and labour, or other collective categories for that matter, represents not the withering of objective patterns of inequality, but a decline of 'class' as a *frame for interpreting* those 'variegated social deprivations and injustices' produced by the stratification of freedom (Bauman, 2004a: 35), fitting snugly with the ideas mentioned above on the decline of symbolically represented classes. Furthermore, the assertion that individuals are increasingly cast in liquid modernity as either 'flawed consumers' or autonomous individuals responsible for their own lot can be reinterpreted as a perfectly plausible description of new ways of carving up the social space in perception, ways propagated in the political sphere by the Thatcher government of the eighties and largely continued today under New Labour. Rethinking one of Bauman's dualisms, *de jure* freedom could then be understood as the widespread construction of social space as composed of autonomous, atomised individuals, with *de facto* freedom referring to the real degree of freedom granted by one's position in social space. However, the same reservation forwarded against Beck has to be entered here as well: if symbolic differences homologous to the divisions of social space continue to yield some sense of difference and similarity – which indeed Bauman's description of the vilification of 'flawed consumers', whilst squeezing out the subtle differences in symbolic space between various areas of social space, implies – then the efficacy of the social space and the theoretical classes it contains in impressing upon visions of the social world remains.

Conclusion: Themes for the Research

Reassessing the theories of individualization from the Bourdieusian standpoint outlined and developed above, then, does not inevitably lead to the conclusion that all three should be rejected outright. Instead we are left with a multitude of themes and concepts that could still signal social changes broadly resembling those outlined by Giddens, Beck and Bauman, albeit re-articulated in a different conceptual vocabulary in which the concept of class is both more subtle and more stubborn, and which must ultimately be confirmed or refuted through empirical research. Let us now, in this concluding section, draw together the strands so far left dangling by recapitulating the main themes, or hypotheses, the

research must examine if it is to determine whether class has ceased to be in the manner specified by the individualization theorists.

First of all, it must be established whether lifeworlds and trajectories remain differentially structured by economic and cultural (but also social) capital in the ways described by Bourdieu and those influenced by him or whether, in line with the theorists of individualization, they are characterised by a flux of new experiences and structural changes as a consequence of globalisation (manifest in knowledge and pursuance of different ways of life) or institutional processes (such as education) that diminish the hold of capital in shaping what is 'normal' for people and their movements in social space. Concomitantly, it will be vital to ascertain the dispositions and attitudes constitutive of each individual's habitus and, crucially, whether 'reflexivity' counts amongst them – in terms of lifestyle practices (Giddens) or key life decisions (Beck) – whether this appears to be a product of new lifeworld experiences and, finally, whether such reflexivity and the experiences generating it are unevenly distributed according to position in social space. Secondly, and moving further towards the subjective dimension of class, the research must examine whether agents still display some form of 'class sense' based on the typification and reading of signs and behaviour as they narrate their biographies and reconstruct their lifeworlds or whether this has dissolved in a sea of individualized consumption practices. Moreover, it must determine whether people talk about 'class' and conceive and label others and their practices in these terms, whether and how this categorisation has any salience and coherent meaning for them, and whether they use it as a framework for interpreting social injustices and political projects or whether personal failings, as Bauman suggests, or lifestyle issues, as Giddens claims, have largely taken its place. Only after all this will we be able to pronounce with some degree of certainty whether class lives on and is fit and well or, conversely, whether it should be interred once and for all.

5. Researching Lifeworlds, Biographies and Habitus

Having emphasised that the method adopted to investigate the empirical credibility of the theories of individualization and reflexivity will be qualitative in nature, and having structured much of the argument in the last chapter and parts of Chapter 2 around this fact, it is time that some space was devoted to justifying the choice of method and outlining its key features and tasks. In what follows, therefore, the precept underlying the selection of qualitative interviews in this instance – Bourdieu's 'methodological polytheism' – will be elaborated, followed by a clarification of the particular phenomena the interviews aim to uncover and a consideration of some of the salient methodological issues and quandaries raised. After that some detail will be given on the characteristics of the sample providing the empirical material for the remaining chapters and the interviews themselves.

Methodological Polytheism

The division between quantitative and qualitative research methods is often depicted as insurmountable. Particular research methods, it is claimed, presuppose a particular philosophical conception of human beings and, therefore, of what the social sciences can and should endeavour to study. Ethnographic and other qualitative methods, for example, are seen to be tightly bound to interpretive or micro-sociologies such as ethnomethodology and Blumerian symbolic interactionism, as only these theorise the complex subjective meanings conferred upon phenomena that such methods document, whilst statistical analysis of data sets is congenial to those who wish to detect the systematic constraints and determinants of action imposed by macro-structures. In practice, however, such a divide is as bogus as it is frequently transgressed. Nowhere is this more apparent than in post-war research on class, where the early tradition of community studies (e.g. Dennis *et al.*, 1969), sociological investigations of the industrial workplace (e.g. Nichols and Beynon, 1977; Beynon, 1984) and those practicing the Birmingham brand of cultural studies (e.g. Willis, 1977) all employed qualitative methods – most frequently ethnography, but supplemented with interviews – with

the specific intention of displaying the manifestation and consequences of objective class structures in everyday life. This brazen disregard for a supposedly established antinomy was bolstered through the eighties by the emergence of explicit challenges to the idea that particular methods of inquiry inevitably bind their practitioners to conceptions of the social world (Marsh, 1982; Bryman, 1988), and, since then, there has been a perceptible move towards a preaching if not necessarily a practicing of methodological pluralism and pragmatism amongst British researchers (Payne *et al.*, 2004).

This commendable development chimes well with the approach to method flowing from the broadly Bourdieusian theoretical scheme outlined in the previous chapter. Grounded as it is in a non-dualistic conception of social practice in which micro and macro, structural and agential and objective and subjective elements of the social cosmos are conceived as 'ontologically complicit' (Bourdieu, 1981), the full breadth of methods – from large-scale statistical analysis to ethnography and in-depth interviews, not to mention discourse analysis and documentary research – can, if stripped of the theoretical assumptions often assigned to them by others and attuned to the Bourdieusian apparatus, be mobilised in the service of advancing knowledge (see e.g. Bourdieu, 1984, 1988b, 1996a). With such a 'methodological polytheism', as Wacquant calls it, the tools of inquiry employed in any particular research act are selected on the simple basis that they 'fit the problem at hand' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 30; see further Inglis *et al.*, 2000). As far as this study is concerned, 'the problem at hand' is obviously the assessment of individualization and increased reflexivity, and this requires the deployment of qualitative research covering life histories, present practices and salient typifications.

The core reason for this has already been touched upon in criticising Goldthorpe's response to individualization: the kind of reflexivity described by Giddens and the others, and its potential differential distribution, would be difficult to capture through quantitative techniques deploying closed, fixed-choice questions or tracing 'origins and destinations', because the actual *process* through which the patterning of trajectories or lifestyle practices takes place – constant negotiation of multiple options, restriction by recognised constraints or tacit pursuance of ingrained possibilities – would remain largely opaque. Instead, some qualitative examination of decision-making processes at key junctures past and present, their

circumstances and historical antecedents is necessary (cf. Brannen and Nilsen, 2005). The same applies to claims regarding the more subjective element of individualization or class – the angst, atomisation and attribution of individual responsibility theorised by Bauman and Beck or the sense of social distance and the linguistic typifications with which it is articulated could not be rendered in all their analytically-vital intricacy in answers to survey questions but instead flow forth best when agents narrate and describe their lives, significant events and relations with others in detail. The latter in particular has, notwithstanding some conceptual and terminological differences, been a pivotal premise and finding of the empirical work of the cultural class analysts and those sympathetic to or homologous with them (see especially Skeggs, 1997; Reay, 1998a, 1998b; Lawler, 2000, 2002; Savage, 2000; Southerton, 2002; cf. also Lamont, 1992, 2000; Archer *et al.*, 2007).

Take, for instance, Surridge's (2007) valiant attempt to mount a defence of the use of quantitative analysis for studying class subjectivities. Some of her points, such as the inability of much qualitative research to systematically compare social and geographical differences, are sound enough. Nevertheless, her approach demonstrates the common weaknesses of quantitative techniques for this purpose, seeing as the 2003 British Social Attitudes Survey, upon which her empirical findings are based, not only imposes pre-conceived class categories on people by giving the options of 'working class' or 'middle class' in asking for class identification – thereby forcing individuals to think that these categories are the legitimate way to divide up the social space in perception and inadvertently *perpetuating* their use when they may otherwise not be used – but misses the various typifications through which individuals may perceive social distance that fall *outside* of the explicit discourse of 'class' (e.g. 'Nike people' versus 'Gucci people', as in Archer *et al.*, 2007, or even 'chavs') which itself may have little tangible meaning to individuals and be denied. As Bourdieu (1984: 472–3) argues, class sense 'in no way implies the capacity to situate oneself explicitly in the classification [i.e. an explicit taxonomy of social classes] (as so many surveys on social class ask people to do)...' and has 'nothing to do with an intellectual operation implying conscious reference to explicit indices and the implementation of classes produced by and for the concept'.

This is not to say that quantitative analysis has no value whatsoever, and indeed statistics are drawn on where necessary to contextualise the data.

Furthermore, a mapping of the homologies between social space and symbolic space using national statistics would be a useful supplement, but as Gayo-Cal *et al.*'s (2006) endeavour to do just this demonstrates, even this could not conclusively document whether or not many of the themes theorised by Giddens and the others and reformulated at the end of the last chapter have any empirical validity.[53] It should also perhaps be noted at this juncture that though some form of ethnography would be an effective means of observing reflexivity or its absence *in situ*, it would remain less able to gather information not only on targeted and thus comparable core themes but, more generally, on the full sweep of individuals' trajectories. The historical antecedents of their current circumstances, dispositions and choices and the structural conditions in which they have lived their lives, of which knowledge is necessary for grounded causal postulations, would therefore remain beyond grasp.

For his own part, Beck (the most attuned to empirical research of the three theorists under examination) would seem to agree that individualization is best assessed with qualitative interviews, and not only because he is critical of quantitative class analysts for continuing to impose static zombie categories on a precarious reality. On one of the rare occasions he has referenced research regarding individualization, for example, he has claimed that the theory has been 'verified' in qualitative interviews insofar as they have documented 'the demand for control over one's own money, time, living space and body', or, in other words, the demand for the 'right to develop [one's] own perspective on life and to be able to act upon it' which has 'arise[n] from actual conditions of life' in countries playing host to individualization (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32; for references to the actual studies see Beck, 1992: 92). Furthermore, he has explicitly described how narrative, life-history research can provide 'rough pragmatic indicators' of individualization: if people speak of 'blows of fate', 'objective conditions' and 'outside forces' that have 'overwhelmed', 'predetermined' or 'compelled' them throughout their lives, he argues, then individualization is refuted; if, on the other hand, 'individuals perceive themselves as at least partly shaping themselves and the conditions of their lives, even or above all in the language of failure', and thus an 'individualistic and active narrative form' in which individuals

---

[53] A forthcoming book by the same research team behind Gayo-Cal *et al.*'s findings promises to be much closer to *Distinction* in terms of methodological pluralism, however.

describe their life events in terms of individual 'decisions, non-decisions, capacities, achievements' and so on is present, then the theory will be vindicated (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 25). The *theoretical* tenuousness of this claim has already been pointed out in the earlier critical overview of his position – when have people ever exclusively used one set of descriptors?[54] – but, nevertheless, Beck can be met on his own empirical terms.

Reconstructing Lifeworlds, Trajectories and Habitus

With the method now justified, it is time to consider how the research will actually proceed. Hopefully it is clear by now that the objective is to reconstruct individual lifeworlds, trajectories and habitus – the latter including dispositions and schemes of perception – and the nexus between them, but what has not been specified and needs elaborating is how exactly this is to be achieved using qualitative interviews, how it corresponds to existing research traditions and some of its built-in limitations.

We can begin this indispensable endeavour by considering first of all the task of reconstructing lifeworlds. Within the phenomenological tradition, from whence the concept originated, conducting research into lifeworlds essentially consists of harvesting vivid idiographic descriptions of the routine, everyday 'reality of common sense' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 34) as it is lived, experienced and interpreted by an individual, group, or wider collectivity. More specifically, it appears to follow Schutz in seeking to capture the 'natural attitude', conceived as the 'cognitive setting of the lifeworld', as it is 'embodied in the processes of subjective human experience' (Titchen and Hobson, 2005: 124) and, as a guiding principle, 'refrains from any causal or genetic hypotheses' (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 34).[55] The approach outlined in the last chapter, however,

---

[54] In yet another demonstration of contradiction, Beck rightly concedes that an 'active' narrative of one's life is separable from the actual chain of events and that the two need not coincide (see below), leading him to the stunning conclusion that *false consciousness* is not 'ruled out' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 25).

[55] There is, in fact, no extant phenomenological tradition of research into the lifeworld in sociology – indeed, phenomenological sociology as a whole was largely subsumed into ethnomethodology in the sixties and seventies – and so this understanding is drawn from theoretical sources and from the disciplines of psychology, education and nursing research, where phenomenology remains a strong school of thought in its own right (see e.g. Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Ashworth, 2003; Titchen and Hobson, 2005). The latter are, however, usually less focussed on the lifeworld than on

demands more. Whilst description of the past and present quotidian milieu of the individual, as relayed in qualitative interviews, is indeed an essential starting point in order to understand the form of experience that has sedimented into the habitus (cf. Bufton, 2003), we must go *beyond* phenomenological description to uncover the objective social structures that have shaped and continue to shape that milieu – its objects, settings and consociates – and the experiences (and hence habitus) it yields without, of course, neglecting the formative impact of the particularities that necessitate the concept. As Bourdieu remarks, phenomenological analysis of the taken-for-granted "is excellent as far as description is concerned but we must go beyond description and raise the issue of the *conditions of possibility* of this doxic experience" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 73, emphasis added). [56] An understanding, therefore, of what was and is 'normal' or 'taken for granted' for agents (doxa), as indicative of what was and is perceived to be 'reasonable' and 'expectable', is crucial, but as they relate specifically to objects, practices, people, constraints and attitudes acting as manifestations of the different forms of capital possessed and their transmission or, if Beck and the others are correct, of insecurity, choice and openness. In this way we can, *pace* the programmatic declaration of Berger and Luckmann, explore the genesis of the habitus and through it practices and trajectories.

Inevitably this is not a straightforward or unproblematic process. It must be borne in mind that a reconstruction of the lifeworld is precisely that – a reconstruction. Its key parameters and salient features – housing, schools, workplaces, parents, friends – and the resultant impact on the habitus can be gleaned, but the constraints of the interview situation and the limits and particularities of memory recapitulation mean that the picture of the lifeworld pieced together from the participant's account can only ever, like a map of a territory with vague patches, be a rudimentary and partial approximation to its rich complexity as a lived reality. But more importantly, perhaps, there is the thorny

---

the experience of specific phenomena and, furthermore, where it is investigated it is often understood in the overly 'idealist' manner mentioned in Chapter 4.

[56] The language here is Kantian, and indeed there are links with the Kant-inspired transcendental argument of critical realism – what must be the case *a priori* for this doxic experience to have the features it does and to be different from or similar to the doxic experience of others? The answer: social structures. See Bhaskar (1975, 1998), Porter (2002) on critical realism and social structures in qualitative research and, on the ambiguous relationship between Bourdieu and critical realism, Wacquant (1989), Vandenberghe (1999) and Potter (2000).

question of exactly how to move beyond the participant's description of their lifeworld – which, as linguistic typifications built into their habitus, are still analytically epicentral – to unveil the underlying objective structures that exist independently of their words and, indeed, have shaped their acquisition and use. Strict constructivists (including phenomenologists), after all, would claim that the agent's description is an active construction of 'reality' and that access to anything beyond that is illusory (see Roberts, 2002: 7). However, following the tenets of Bourdieu's constructivist realism, introduced briefly in the last chapter, the descriptions must be treated as at one and the same time linguistic typifications conveying reality from the point of view of a subjective scheme of perception *and* in at least some sense pragmatic indicators of facets of the milieu demonstrative of the operations of relational structures that could be verified with alternative sources – documents, records, others' accounts – if needed.

The same applies to the analysis of biographies, and here Bourdieu has explicitly warned against the so-called 'biographical illusion' that haunts much life-history analysis, that is, the failure to move beyond the subject's rationalisations and construction of events (their reasons or 'in-order-to motives') to trace their trajectory through the space of objective relations and the cumulative effect this has on dispositions and attitudes (the 'because motives') (Bourdieu, 2000b). In order not to fall foul of such an illusion, therefore, the interviewee's account of the junctures and episodes from their neonatal years up to their present 'biographical situation' (Schutz, 1970b: chap 7) must be treated as a rough guide to the travels made through social space and homologous fields, bolstered by the accumulation of information on certain objective indices (occupation, pay, qualifications). In this way, the altering physiognomy of the lifeworld brought by the movements – horizontal, transverse, and possibly more complex combinations like curves – or the lack thereof and their resultant impact on the habitus can be considered along with the events which patently reveal either the constraints or opportunities granted by a certain level and structure of capital or, if the individualization thesis is correct, the general flux, reflexivity and changeability across the board.

At the same time, however (and this Bourdieu does not mention), whilst the rationalisation and explanation of events is to be sifted for indicators of objective movements and conditioning experiences, it is also, as a construction of personal

history from a certain scheme of perception produced through engagement in the social world, a vital source of data in itself. For it is here that the chain of life events (whether or not they actually demonstrate constraints and so on) would either be dressed in the language of active choice, decision-making and individual responsibility, as Beck and Bauman suppose, or conveyed in an idiom less favourable to the theories of individualization and reflexivity. The latter could include, in direct contradiction of Beck and Bauman's claims, a recognition of the role of broader social issues such as widespread unemployment and inequality (including that explicitly described as class-based) in shaping the constraints and expectations that have characterised their path – akin to what Willis (1977) called 'partial penetration'. But it could also take more complex, subtle and implicit forms, such as the *naturalisation* of inequality as differences of cultural capital are perceived as rightly-rewarded innate intellectual capabilities and talents – what Bourdieu often referred to as the dominant's 'sociodicy of their own privilege' – or more simply an explanation of events in terms of what was 'normal', 'the done thing', 'what everyone did', or 'for people like me', thereby evincing the expectations and orientations of the habitus built out of the objective probabilities inscribed in the lifeworld by its position in the social space. In all cases, the agent's narrative must be linked to the experiences encountered in carving their trajectory in order to detect the *generation* and *distribution* of inclinations towards particular 'vocabularies of motive' (Mills, 1940).

Again, however, this is not an easy task. As with the investigation of lifeworlds, the reconstruction of biographical paths is limited by not only the peculiarities of memory recall – confabulation, exaggeration or just plain forgetting – which depend on the structure and content of the habitus *qua* stock of knowledge and the situational imperatives of the interview, but also the limited information which can be attained in an interview. A comprehensive understanding of the structure and history of each field the agent is and has been positioned in and of the fields in which the institutions they have passed through are and were positioned, for example, must remain elusive. Nevertheless, interviews can, as Bourdieu argues, grant a general and 'genetic' comprehension of the participants by enabling an overall "grasp of the social conditions of which they are a product", that is, a "grasp of the circumstances of life and the social mechanisms" affecting them – including, in departure from Bourdieu's own strict approach, the salient formative

experiences and events of the evolving lifeworld which fall outside the strict logic of fields – and the primary categories to which they belong and of the "conditions, inseparably psychological and social, associated with a given position and trajectory in social space" (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1999: 613).

This leads us to consider, finally, the habitus. In fact, much has been implied on the investigation of its genesis and characteristic dispositions so far, and indeed it is in the narration of life histories and the taken-for-granted world that the different facets of the habitus – expectations, orientations to the future, principles of action, tastes, schemes of perception and class sense – come to the fore. Here, then, only a few comments on some of the more direct ways in which it is to be tapped are necessary. First of all, the interviews aim to elicit information on the lifestyle practices, tastes (specifically, as an exemplar, musical tastes) and political views of participants and their origins in the lifeworld with the intention of uncovering either their roots in the experiences granted by the material and cultural conditions of life, therefore lending some support to Bourdieu on the homology between such symbolic markers and the social space, or, if there is anything to Giddens' thesis, their reflexively-chosen nature in the face of augmented choice and availability. Secondly, although the life-history component of the interviews will endeavour to uncover the practical typifications and associations mobilised by individuals, the interviews will also aim to explore in depth the participants' schemes of perception as they relate specifically to class – that is, what 'class' means to them as a system of typifications, whether and how they perceive their life events, sense of difference and similarity and symbolic markers in class terms, and how important they see it to be – and, again, their connection to positions, trajectories and experiences. However, in order to better capture whether class has any explicit salience for the participants without specific prompting and to avoid the kind of criticism levelled at Marshall *et al.* (1988) who did the opposite, this line of investigation obviously comes *last*, after the narration of the life history and discussion of lifestyle practices and views, so as not to influence the terms used to relay them.

The Characteristics and Construction of the Sample

The only question left to answer is *whose* lifeworlds, trajectories and habitus are being reconstructed? Originally, and motivated in part by the approach of the *Affluent Worker* team, the intention was to target and compare three specific sets of workers as theoretically-relevant 'test cases' of the individualization thesis – manual workers drawn from one factory, what Giddens calls 'wired workers' (problem-solving IT workers who he claims are at the forefront of the kind of political changes he describes) drawn from one 'post-industrial' workplace, and managers drawn from both the employers already yielding workers, all of whom were to be aged between 18 and 40 in order to capture the experiences of the generations living the key phases of their lives through the period of social change theorised by Beck, Bauman and Giddens. However, in the end, and for reasons that will be examined shortly, the final sample does not correspond to this neat tripartite division. Instead, as Table 1 shows, the sample consists of 26 individuals from various sectors of social space, two of which (Dave and Frank) peak above the designated age range to give the insights of a slightly older generation (no bad thing given their ability to compare their own trajectories with those of their children and the fact that Giddens claims that increased reflexivity and 'experimentation with lifestyles' applies as much to older people as to their younger counterparts – 2007: 66). Many of these have comparatively little in the way of economic, cultural or social capital because of their trajectories and occupations and hence inhabit varying positions in the dominated lower to lower-middle section of social space. The rest of the sample consists of a mix of more or less dominant positions ranging from the middle belt of social space (e.g. Paul) to the higher reaches (e.g. Claire) and from those possessing more cultural capital and further to the left of social space (e.g. Nigel) to those with more economic capital and further to the right (e.g. Oliver), thus allowing considerable scope for comparison.[57] Amongst these there is, fortunately, a sizeable contingent of those fi-

[57] For practical reasons interviewees were required to be in full-time work to take part: occupation allows a 'good and economical indicator' of capital (Bourdieu, 1987: 4), but it was also a guard against an over-representation of the unemployed in the sample, seeing as they are more likely to have time to participate and hence volunteer themselves. Periods of unemployment for the dominant and dominated are still covered in their life histories. Hannah represents an exception because she moved from full-time to part-time work between initial contact and the interview date.

Table 1. The Research Participants

Name*	Occupation	Age**	Position/Trajectory in Social Space***	Notes
Abby	Teacher (secondary)	28	Dominant/static	
Andy	Studio manager	43	Dominated/static	
Bernadette	Computer graphic designer	32	Dominant/upwardly mobile	French
Claire	Senior manager	38	Dominant/static	
Dave	Lorry driver	51	Dominated/static	
Elizabeth	Computer programmer	39	Dominant/static	
Frank	Hospital technician	53	Dominated/static	
Gary	Driving instructor	44	Dominated/static	
Hannah	Administrator (part-time)	30	Dominated/static	
Isabelle	NHS scientist	26	Dominant/static	
Jackie	Project manager	38	Dominant/static	
Joe	Technician	35	Dominated/static	
Karen	Junior doctor	28	Dominant/static	
Lisa	HR officer	34	Dominant/upwardly mobile	
Mark	Computer programmer	35	Dominant/static	
Nigel	University reader	45	Dominant/static	Irish
Oliver	Operations manager	40	Dominant/static	
Paul	Software developer	41	Dominant/upwardly mobile	
Phil	Shift co-ordinator	33	Dominated/static	
Rebecca	HR advisor	30	Dominant/static	Canadian
Samuel	Doctor (hospital surgeon)	35	Dominant/upwardly mobile	
Tessa	Junior doctor	28	Dominant/upwardly mobile	
Tina	Apprentice painter	18	Dominated/static	
Trisha	Technician	37	Dominated/static	Trans-gendered
Yvonne	Driving instructor	42	Dominated/static	
Zack	Software engineer	28	Dominant/upwardly mobile	

* All names are pseudonyms

** All ages have been changed by one or two years either way

*** The attribution of broad positions and trajectories in social space, which does violence to the complexity of social positioning and disallow any consideration of differentiation by class fraction but nevertheless serves as a useful heuristic, is worked out only loosely on the basis of a knowledge of interviewees' origins, incomes, wealth, education, cultural competences and possessions and social ties and their place within the overall system of which they are a part (i.e. average incomes, distributions of educational credentials and so on, taken from the January–March 2007 sweep of The Labour Force Survey, an imperfect but sufficient source for the purpose). The term 'dominant', so as to capture the key contrast, is perhaps slightly more encompassing here than Bourdieu's (1984).

tting to greater and lesser degrees the description of wired worker, that is, they work with computers most of the day, are oriented to problem solving and so on (Bernadette, Elizabeth, Mark, Paul and Zack), so Giddens can still be held to account on this front.[58] The sample comprises 14 women (including one trans-gendered individual) and 12 men,[59] all are British save three participants born overseas (Bernadette, Nigel and Rebecca) who have nevertheless lived in the UK and been positioned in its social space for at least ten years, and all of the participants are white. This last fact is particularly regrettable, for not only does it render the sample unrepresentative of the UK population on this score but it precludes analysis of the intersection of class or individualization with race or ethnicity beyond 'whiteness'. All respondents were from Bristol, a fairly typical British city insofar as it has experienced a significant downturn in industrial activity and a corresponding burgeoning of its service sector (especially in finance, IT and low-level call centre work) in line with broader shifts in the economy and is starkly segregated spatially in terms of economic and cultural resources (for details see Fenton and Dermott, 2006), or else its satellite communities.

The final sample differs so much from that originally planned because of persistent difficulties of access. Relevant employers of the three groups mentioned above had been contacted and possible gatekeepers identified in their midst in the hope that they might assist in contacting potential participants, but such hopes were unrealised as numerous impediments accumulated: unreturned calls, letters and emails; referral and deferral around multiple departments; constant evasion; and, once in communication with a suitable representative of the employer (either in hurried phone conversations or fruitless meetings), lack of interest, suspicion of veiled intentions and unwillingness to bear the responsibility and time-burden required to support the research. Smaller employers in the region were also

---

[58] It is worth noting that Giddens' terminology has recently changed, so that whereas once the term wired workers referred to new occupations in the 'infotech' sector involving work with computers, non-hierarchical settings and creative problem solving, such as software development, web design, graphic design and systems analysis (2000: 43–4; cf. 2001b: 294, 382), now they are seen to be lower level computer-based occupations, with the more specialised IT workers now being separated out and referred to as 'Apple Mac workers' (2007: 62). Given the extreme superficiality and brevity of his reasoning in this latest change compared to his earlier logic, which itself was far from well developed, where it is used in this study the term wired worker is given its original, more encompassing meaning.

[59] I should stress that though class is always gendered, and though relevant points will be flagged where necessary, the aim of the analysis is to draw out the class-based similarities *across* the sexes rather than their differences.

approached less formally through a contact within the university, but this was again unsuccessful. Such resistance, whether from private or public organisations, is a common obstacle in sociological research (see, for example, Devine, 1992: 33; cf. also Hammersley, 1997: 137), and, in this case, appeared to be the product of several interacting factors: the demanding schedules of harassed and indifferent middle-managers who did not perceive any utility or significance in the research, distrust of exogenous researchers of the workforce who may produce unfavourable findings at odds with the self-perception of the company and the tendency for large corporations to have 'in-house' research teams that, as far as they are concerned, obviate or at least take priority over external research.[60]

With much time expended, two trade unions were contacted instead and both, unlike the employers, expressed interest in the project and were keen to assist. In one case, the union contact took it upon himself to strive to recruit participants by approaching union members; in another I was invited to present the research to stewards at educational classes and conduct brief focus group interviews with the hope of inciting interest and disseminating leaflets. In both cases, unfortunately, participants once more proved elusive. Only one respondent came forward through the first union, despite the best efforts of the contact over several months, and the education classes, notwithstanding the apparent enthusiasm of the participants, were uncomfortably reticent when explicitly propositioned. Some of the stewards did take leaflets to pass on to others (others did not even look at them), but, after a long wait, it was apparent that nothing was to come of it.

Clearly if the research was not to be suffocated once and for all, alternative means of access would have to be employed, and with time leaching relentlessly away such means would have to be relatively expedient and efficient and would hence have to jettison the focus on specific occupations and employers and instead switch attention to individuals from across the social space. Two new methods were mobilised: firstly, to set the wheels of the study in motion some were

---

[60] On this last trend see Savage and Burrows (2007). They tie it to a shift toward a reflexive, 'knowing capitalism', not dissimilar to Giddens' vision of increased institutional reflexivity, and prognosticate rather stark consequences for empirical sociology. However, though they rightly highlight the regrettable monopoly of private organisations on certain forms of data, they underplay the comparative epistemological and theoretical rigour of academic sociology given by its (increasingly threatened) relative autonomy in the field of knowledge production which allows the distance from practical and exogenous demands to make the required break from prenotional experience (cf. Bourdieu, 2004).

recruited through informal contacts, and secondly, inspired in part by Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst's (2005b) procedure of access to interviewees, a letter inviting individuals to take part was mailed out to three-hundred individuals selected at random from the electoral register for three separate wards of Bristol, themselves chosen on the basis of their occupational constitutions as revealed by census statistics in order to maximise the spread of respondents across social space (i.e. one characterised by predominantly manual occupations, one predominantly professional-managerial, one mixed).

The mail-out, however, produced a problem. Whilst an acceptable overall number were recruited through this method, the overwhelming majority of those who replied were in professional or managerial occupations and, to complicate things further, were disproportionately clustered at the upper region of the designated age range. Not only were the experiences of manual workers thus lacking in any serious capacity, making it impossible to compare across regions of social space and draw any satisfactory conclusions, but those of young people, who have experienced within the time frame of the individualization thesis the kinds of transitions through education and work that should clearly reveal either reflexive decision making or class processes, were to all intents and purposes absent. In order to balance the sample on these two fronts, then, two further methods of contact were employed. Firstly, to increase the participation of younger individuals, letters were sent out on a random basis to recent graduates of the university through the alumni office. Several participants were recruited through this means, so it was, overall, successful. Secondly, as regards the manual workers, once again small employers in the area were contacted, but again the phone calls were deflected and emails unreturned and it was finally conceded that employers would not provide the help needed. So more contacts were creatively unearthed and pressed and a sufficient number recruited, though these participants were, in many ways, untypical – for instance, Trisha is trans-gendered, whilst another recruit from this method had a history of serious drug use. In fact it was most likely their untypicality that prompted them to take part, seeing as, in the face of broadly-pitched research investigating (dis)advantages and values,[61] they felt they 'had a story'. It can thus only be speculated how many heard the call for participants and

---

[61] At all stages the research was advertised and explained without the term 'class' ever being used so as not to influence who took part and what they said and defeat the object from the start.

decided not to take part under the impression that sociological research would not be interested in them because they are 'nothing special' or 'just normal' and 'haven't had anything interesting happen to them' and 'wouldn't know what to say' anyway. Indeed, coupled with the inconvenience many no doubt assumed the research would be and possibly a more general disinclination for 'talking about oneself', especially with a stranger, it is possible that such an impression underlay the overall dearth of people willing to take part.[62]

The result of all these tribulations is a montage of methods of access, with part of the sample being randomly sampled from two separate sampling frames and part of it purposively selected for balance, but not a wholly unrepresentative or unsatisfactory collection of interviewees for the purpose at hand. Still, it must be acknowledged that the power of gatekeepers motivated by practical concerns and the reluctance of people to partake in the research meant that the theoretically-optimal sample had to be abandoned. Such social obstacles to sociological inquiry and resultant accommodations are, given their frequency, to be expected and the researcher must, like Canguilhem's pirate-scientists (cited in Bourdieu, 1996a: 232), harness opportunities where they arise, seize chances and creatively negotiate constraints if they are to successfully produce adequate knowledge on their subject matter. They must, in other words, 'win the social fact' not just *epistemologically*, as in Bourdieu's rationalist axiom, but *practically* as well. That said, both problems encountered, insofar as they appeared to stem at least partially from it, point to a broader, regrettable situation that raises fundamental questions for sociological research: the disjunction between the perceived necessity and utility of sociological research on behalf of the sociologist and on behalf of those who would partake in it, itself largely the product of the frustratingly low status of sociology in the public consciousness – in the double sense that awareness of sociology is scarce and where there is acknowledgement it is often pejorative. Indicators of this include the British Sociological Association's recent inquiry into the use of sociology in the UK media, which revealed a disheartening paucity of cited research and its supplanting with the quasi-sociological musings of journalists (reported in Gaber, 2005), as well as the fact that the discipline has a negligible hold on the public's imagination compared to popular disciplines like evolutionary psychology (see

---

[62] Especially in the case of manual workers, there are perhaps parallels here with Bourdieu's (1984: chap. 8) analysis of 'don't know' responses in surveys.

Jackson and Rees, 2007) and a feeble influence in the political and commercial spheres – the realms of those dominating the field of power in contemporary society – compared to the 'research' of politically-oriented think-tanks, opinion pollsters and market research institutions. Indeed, some respondents in the present study, on learning of its disciplinary orientation, produced disparaging comments to the effect that sociology was misguided, crude and somehow outdated. There is not the space to fully examine why this state of affairs is so – though increased institutional reflexivity, the discipline's relative youth in the UK, debates over its scientificity, its heterogeneity and internal discord and the fact that social reality is seen as too important to be left to the sociologists alone (Bourdieu, 2004: 86–7) who, in any case, 'cause trouble' for the dominant by revealing domination and inequality where it is claimed there is none (Bourdieu, 1993a: 8–19), probably play their part – or how it can be effectively remedied. In any case, clarion calls for 'public sociology' (Burawoy, 2005), that is, a sociology that can contribute to public debates over the direction and values of society, are all very well, but to have a sociology *for* the public a sociology *with* the public is first necessary, and that is by no means an easy feat.

Before moving on to describe the interviews, a closing word on generalisation. Unlike many studies deploying qualitative methods, some level of extrapolation is desirable if the assessment of individualization and reflexivity is to move beyond the local level. Given the recurrent dissociation of qualitative research from any generalising capacities, however, some may question the extent to which conclusions can be drawn regarding theories held to have a national and even international application on the basis of twenty-six interviews with individuals from one British city, even if random sampling from the electoral register helps by not restricting the findings to specific categories of people. In response, insight can be taken from Bourdieu's claim that the relational mode of thought in play here allows us to *overcome* the distinction between generalising nomothetic research and localised idiographic analysis by allowing us to 'grasp particularity in generality and generality in particularity', with the end result that the unearthed themes can be treated, as Bachelard would say, as a 'particular case of the possible' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 75). This guiding principle can, it seems to me, be clarified, elaborated and reinforced by two extant strategies of generalisation in qualitative research. First of all, there are parallels with a

neglected method of extrapolation dubbed 'theoretical generalisation' in which wider inferences can be drawn from small-scale qualitative research on the basis of uncovering conceptualised structures and patterns with a broader applicability beyond the sample (Mitchell, 1983). If, for example, capital stocks are shown to be pivotal in shaping trajectories and habitus, then logically this can be generalised to some degree because capital stocks only exist in a relational structure (i.e. the social space) that is *trans-local*. The consequences for the theories of individualization and reflexivity on this front would, therefore, be far from restricted. At the same time, however, and especially in the case of more particular themes that emerge inductively (e.g. those regarding identity, subjectivity and so on), over-generalisation must be avoided and something akin to what has recently been called a 'moderatum' form of generalisation, in which claims of broader applicability can be forwarded so long as they are relatively moderate in scope, made on an open-ended basis and explicitly acknowledged as such (Williams, 2000, 2002; Payne and Williams, 2005), adopted.

The Interviews

Five interviews were conducted at the university, but the rest took place at the interviewees' homes or workplaces, thus allowing access to the domains of their lifeworlds, the objects and people that populate them and, to some extent, the experiential parameters of their daily lives. There is a sense, therefore, in which a form of basic ethnographic research began before the interviews were underway, indeed before the houses or workplaces were even entered and the interviewees greeted as the areas in which people lived and worked revealed the material and cultural structuring of their lifeworlds and, what is more, the tastes characterising their habitus. So, for example, the home of Samuel, an ambitious surgeon, was situated in a quiet suburban street comprised of large Georgian houses converted into luxury flats and, on the inside, was capacious and lavish with elegant modern decoration, parquet flooring and expensive consumer goods, whereas Hannah's house in a predominantly red-brick street of varyingly decrepit semi-detacheds was much smaller, cluttered and filled with well-worn, functional furniture. Some homes, like Abby's, bore testament to the ample cultural capital of their inhabitants by having, in her case, poetry anthologies and works by Flaubert embedded in large

literature-filled bookcases, whereas others, such as Yvonne's, contained few books but numerous family photos and knickknacks instead. Or again, compare the large bucolic cottage, situated in a tranquil hamlet on a country lane, belonging to Elizabeth, a computer programmer rich in both economic and cultural capital and cohabitating with her 'hospital-building' partner, with Dave's house wedged in the middle of a weathered terrace lining a narrow city street filled with ageing cars. Similarly with workplaces, some interviews were conducted in the plush, serene private offices of the interviewees (e.g. Nigel and Oliver) whilst another took place in a cramped canteen smaller than either office but meant for a whole workforce (e.g. Phil, a low-level supervisor). Nevertheless, the exact biographical provenance of the various environs and artefacts and their place in systems of tastes and perceptions could not be illuminated until the interviews were underway.

The interviews themselves lasted eighty minutes on average, ranging from a little over two hours in length to just thirty minutes (the only interview to be below an hour in duration). All were recorded, with permission, using a digital voice recorder and transcribed. The interviews were informal events, with some participants more loquacious than others, but contrary to what might be expected, and unlike Byrne's (2006: 36) experience, this propensity did not neatly correlate with positions in social space or social distance between interviewee and interviewer, most likely because those in the lower sections of social space who came forward to be interviewed were, perhaps at odds with the general disposition of those in similar positions on account of their particular experiential histories, obviously comfortable enough with the prospect of talking at length about themselves to volunteer themselves and in some cases, as mentioned above, saw themselves as having a worthwhile 'story' to tell.

Insofar as the interviews were opportunities for people to recount and explain their life choices and life paths, they regularly shifted into an 'induced and accompanied self-analysis' of the manner described by Bourdieu in *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1999: 615), the specific substance of which is, as previously discussed, an empirical theme covered later. In several cases though, and notably amongst those richer in cultural capital, such a self-analysis, whether or not it corresponded with the analysis of the sociologist, was accompanied by post-interview declarations that the experience had provoked contemplation and talk on themes and processes which they 'wouldn't usually think about' or that are

'taken for granted' (Isabelle), that it had prompted them to 'question themselves' and 'take stock' (Tessa) and even that it had been akin to a 'free therapy session' in which one can 'analyse, think about and discuss' oneself (Samuel). The language is, perhaps, reminiscent of that of individualization, but a distinction must be made here between *reflection* and *reflexivity*. The interviewees no doubt *reflected* on aspects of their lives usually 'taken for granted' in their descriptions and explorations, but this is not the *reflexivity* specifically described by Beck or Giddens: the interview situation, once entered, did not present a plurality of options in relation to life paths and lifestyles amongst which the interviewees then selected in a bid to answer the omnipresent question 'how shall I live?'; and it did not, so far as I could tell, induce a revision of an existing life plan or contribute to the formulation of a resolution on a sphere of life newly open to choice.

Conclusion

The tasks set for this chapter are now complete and the empirical assessment of individualization can begin. The following analysis is divided into two parts. Just as Bourdieu (1987) distinguished the objective moment and the subjective moment of class, and just as he separately analysed cognitive structures and objective social structures in *The State Nobility* (1996a: Parts 1 and 3 respectively), so the strategy here is to separate for analytical purposes the objective dimension of social life – structures of capital, social conditions and their effect on trajectories through the habitus or unhindered reflexive decision making – and the subjective dimension – tastes, schemes of perception, systems of typifications and the practical sense of difference and similarity or unbridled individualism and atomisation. In actuality these elements are inseparably entwined and, hence, in each case there will inevitably be interconnections and intrusions in the analysis – after all, objective structures operate through subjectivity as they are perceived and structure perception, whilst subjective perception is always anchored in the experiences shaped by one's position in objective structures. Nevertheless, for the most part we can, in a similar fashion to Giddens (1984), 'bracket' one dimension in order to concentrate on the properties and processes of the other, beginning first by pushing aside the subjective constructions and typifications of

the world to explore the effects or non-effects of relational social structures on life paths and practices.

6. Classed Paths in a Changing Social Context

Many of the shifts in the social architecture that Beck and Giddens perceive to be the underlying motors of individualization and increased reflexivity do indeed form part of the present context for individual lives. Post-compulsory education, and particularly higher education, for example, has expanded beyond its previous confines and offered an avenue of upward mobility to those who, in previous generations, would not have considered application, opening up the lifeworld to novel experiences of different physical spaces and diverse *modi vivendi* socially and geographically distant from the initial familial milieu. Mobility across the country or between nations trailing jobs or vacationing in distant locales, furthermore, coupled with an awareness and appropriation of cultural practices and goods originating in far-removed national contexts given technological advances in communications and transportation, inevitably feed into experiential streams and leave their indelible residue in minds, bodies and tastes. Finally, alongside such 'disembedding mechanisms', as Beck would call them, there is even something to the idea that the transition from education to work is cast as a matter of individual choice in the face of multiple options, with schools and allied organisations supplying services and information and encouraging pupils to deliberate and decide what is 'best for them' in a post- (or de-) industrialised and neo-liberal climate.

But this does not portend the decline of class. Only if the sociologist failed to peer beneath the surface, to suspend the popular constructions and interpretations of social transformations and to operate with the relational conception of class, could such a claim be made. For at all stages, at all times, and through all the above-identified phenomena, class processes continue to permeate the life courses and life practices of individuals, from their earliest lifeworld experiences through their educational trajectories and occupational histories, not only where there is social reproduction – perhaps not directly occupational, though this does occur, but certainly within the same area of social space – but also where there is, against all odds, apparent vertical mobility in the social space. The social and economic context may have changed, and the processes through which

inequalities born of capital distribution function may have been reconfigured, but the structure and effects of class remain as powerful and pervasive as ever.

Though its full complexity must remain elusive given constraints of space, this will be the argument developed over the course of the present chapter. To do this as clearly and effectively as possible the interviewees' life histories have been split into three sections corresponding to the chronological unfurling of biography: the experience of education, the transition out of schooling into either higher education or work and, finally, social trajectories as embedded in occupational histories. In each case, the experiences of the two predominant clusters of interviewees – those who have reproduced their social advantage and those who have reproduced their social disadvantage – are charted in order to reveal not the indubitable prevalence of a new-found, classless reflexivity but the manifold ways in which, in contrast, every experience and action is imprinted with the weighty stamp of one's relational position in the social space. After that there will be a word on the upwardly mobile within the sample – a not insignificant minority – and the general principles that set them apart from the majority.

Schooling: Enjoyment versus Endurance

In Beck's vision of 'second modernity' schools function as factories of unadulterated reflexivity, endlessly transforming children into fully individualized beings regardless of their conditions of life. The reality revealed amongst the interviewees, however, is rather different. For as Bourdieu and Passeron (1979, 1990) argued several decades ago and contemporary sociologists of education inspired by their work continue to contend, the child enters school as an assumed equal but, in fact, the iniquitous distribution of the capital required to succeed – cultural capital – invariably, like a light-refracting prism, differentiates performance, experience and the valuation of schooling, with the capital they depart with as a result then shaping future life courses by delimiting access to a particular 'field of possibles' (Bourdieu, 1984: 110).

The Dominant

In the case of those born to parents of the upper sections of social space, the ample capital inhering in their structured lifeworlds supplied them with the resources necessary to thrive, shaping their experience of and performance within the education system and thence their tacit assessment of realisable goals. This came principally from two sources: the direct and indirect *transmission of parental cultural capital* and the *mobilisation of economic capital*. In terms of cultural capital, a social power the institutionalised markers of which (undergraduate and postgraduate degrees) most of the parents of the dominant interviewees possessed, this was imparted via two modes of transmission. The first, a simple but effective method, is concentrated and capable assistance with schoolwork – something which many of the advantaged interviewees reported. For example, Rebecca, a human resources advisor who completed her schooling in Canada but whose privileged position in the UK is a product of her privileged position and trajectory through the Canadian social space (her father is a PhD-educated dean of a cathedral, and her mother is a music teacher), said, when asked whether her parents had ever helped with her work:

> Yeah, not my dad, he was always working, he wasn't really home that much. He didn't get home 'til about ten most nights. *So my mum would help if I needed it. Yeah, they always had a big part in my schooling when I needed it*. (emphasis added).

Similarly, Abby, a languages teacher at a secondary school and daughter to an affluent and globally-mobile IT businessman and a teacher, stated that her mother would 'sit me down and we'd do homework and she knew what I was supposed to be doing and what I had to be getting on with, so yeah, she would help me.' Some interviewees surreptitiously conveyed the same phenomenon disguised behind declarations of parental incapacity. Claire, a reserved senior manager with a national business services firm, for example, said this, with characteristic concision, when asked whether her parents – a self-employed ophthalmic optician and his administrator – had ever provided help with homework:

> Well I think by the end of the first year [of A levels] that was beyond them so [laughter]! But they did up 'til then. But after that then no.

What this discursive morsel reveals is, of course, that her parents *had helped her* until A levels, topics outside of their sphere of knowledge, thus helping to lay the foundations for successful independent study. Elizabeth indicates much the same phenomenon – that whilst the parent in question was unable to assist with advanced

homework he had still *attempted to*, disclosing a relationship to schoolwork at odds with that of the dominated – in relation to her father, a wheat and beef cattle farmer,[63] but quickly reveals an alternative source of intellectual support:

> He liked maths. He couldn't do my homework either but – my grandmother was very brainy actually. My grandmother went to Bristol uni and read chemistry, which is quite unusual really if you think, cos that would have been sort of like 1920s, and a women reading chemistry would have been quite – particularly as you actually had to read German in order to read chemistry cos all the textbooks were in German. Sounds very hard to me. But she used to be able to do my A level maths homework when I couldn't, which always impressed me. She was seventy-odd.

This passage leads on to the second, *indirect* modality of cultural capital transmission in which the experiential fabric of the lifeworld, as shaped by parental capital stocks, sediments into the child and nurtures capital and capital-generating dispositions. The following are demonstrative, starting first with Elizabeth on the form of experiential input granted by acquaintance with that educated grandparent:

> Elizabeth: Yeah she [my grandmother] must've been [one of the first women to go to university], and certainly to sort of read a, you know read a science. I mean it used to make us laugh cos all her, in her cupboards at home she wouldn't have the names of things she'd have the chemical formulae on them.

> Abby: She'd [my mother] spend a lot of time testing me on spellings and talking about – I remember all the time, it'd be like driving home and work out whether something was a noun, adjective or verb.

> Nigel: But I think it helped that while I was at school my father was also studying for medical, further medical qualifications. So you know, we'd all sit in the same room and do our homework together, which was nice, you know, it felt it was natural to do this, sit there for an hour or an hour and a half or whatever it was in silence.

Here demonstrated are the two principle means through which this occurs: parental socialisation practices which, quite apart from guidance and advice on specific schoolwork, takes the form of ongoing parent-child interactions pre-reflexively centred on everyday learning and the use of reason (cf. Lareau, 2000, 2003) and, secondly, the recurrent routines, practices and experiences constituting time-space paths. So the routines established by Nigel's father in his effort to augment his own

---

[63] It might be inquired as to why, exactly, a daughter of a farmer has been included amongst interviewees said to have reproduced advantage given that, in the diagram of social space presented in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984: 128–9), farmers occupy the lowest of all positions in the social space. The reality of the matter is that farming in the UK, perhaps unlike 1960s France, is and has long been a highly stratified field homologous with the social space, stretching from wealthy estate-owners with ties to the aristocracy, affluent capitalist farmers and 'gentlemen farmers' who are often privately educated to struggling tenant farmers and small crofters (for the historical context see Scott, 1982, 1990; for an example of a well-heeled and educated farmer, see Allatt, 1993). It is difficult to place Elizabeth's father accurately, but her descriptions of him as educated (he was an agricultural college graduate) and well-spoken and of the farmhouse as a 'massive' six-bedroomed abode, as well as the fact that her mother was a teacher, are enough to distance her lifeworld from the poorer sections of social space.

capital induced disciplined study as a part of his child's natural attitude; the everyday learning practices foisted upon Abby by her teacher mother and doubtless missing or at least not as frequent or informed amongst the dominated, as a use of capital to produce capital, inevitably heightened her ability; and, finally, Elizabeth's immersion in a world where (*inter alia*) chemical formulae are not only present but woven in to quotidian life is bound to have left its mark on her stock of knowledge and, specifically, to have deposited socially valued contents within it.

This is not, however, solely a tale of cultural capital, for economic capital and, through what can be safely (given the theoretical conditions laid out in Chapter 4) described as parental *strategies*, its investment and conversion also conferred substantial advantages. Principally this was through the purchase of private education, something almost all of the dominant interviewees either experienced or nearly experienced as their parents considered their options. This was not construed as an effortless commitment on their parents' behalf – many of the interviewees describe with lament how they had to forgo holidays, new clothes and the other goods and practices common amongst their contemporaries at school – but they still possessed the ample capital, often aided by scholarships won through the transmission of cultural capital, to pay school fees and live comfortably. In any case, the effects of private schooling – its ethos and pedagogic practices – in shaping the orientations and performance of the interviewees cannot be underestimated: as Debra Roker (1993) so clearly demonstrates in her own research, the assumption and expectation of hard work and educational success is communicated to pupils from day one, written into the pedagogic practices of the school and sustained by the dispositions (e.g. 'motivation') and induced self-belief of the pupils themselves. In such institutions 'you don't have any choice about working', said Elizabeth, whereas 'at comps you do', whilst Abby claimed that not just the small class sizes but the expectations within her school inculcated 'an ability to succeed'. She elaborates:

> Abby: [at private school] your own expectations, parental expectations, are different. That's probably why people do better coming out of private school – not cos the teaching's better.
>
> WA: What do you mean by expectations?
>
> Abby: Expectations of the school, expectations – everyone who was in my class. I mean I was probably middle of my class, but all my friends wanted their ten A*s and I remember one of my friends crying cos she got a B. Now at the school I work at probably someone would be crying with shame if they got a B cos it's not cool. It's a whole different thing, people don't answer back to teachers, people don't sit there going [she pretends to yawn in

a fed up way]. I mean the whole attitude is completely different. There are no big discipline issues in a – I mean I don't remember ever, ever – mean I got told off for going 'I don't know'. I think I just said it in the wrong tone of voice. Just a whole different kettle of fish [...] We'd have frees and we'd go to the library and work. It was just a whole different, whole different kettle of fish. And you're kind of motivated by those people around you, cos that's the standard, that's how everyone works and behaves and does, whereas I suppose the people look around at the school I work at and it's a whole different set of mixed messages – I mean if you're not sure.

WA: So is it discipline?

Abby: There was no need, everyone wanted to do well cos they knew their parents were paying a lot of money for it and they all knew – my best friend wanted to be a doctor, and somebody else wanted to be – they all knew they had these great expectations, there was no doubt.

Of course it was not just the school and the contemporaries there that conveyed the expectations forming the backcloth to life, as Abby hints, but parents too.[64] Indeed, all of the dominant interviewees' parents displayed a committed *involvement and interest in* and *encouragement of* schooling – which, as we will see below, is a far from universal phenomenon – no doubt based on an inculcated desire for their child to succeed (or 'reproduce' their social position), a knowledge of what is necessary for this given their own experience – the 'information on the educational system' mentioned by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: end diagram, note 5) and examined by Devine (2004) – and a tacit protention (upon which projects are built) that this is probable, or at least realisable, given the stocks of capital they can invest (cf. Allatt, 1993; Reay, 1998a; Lareau, 2000). Hence when asked about their parents' approach to their schooling, the interviewees would typically mention that 'they were really encouraging and really interested' (Karen, junior doctor and daughter to a social worker-turned-teacher and social worker), that 'they were always quick to congratulate and you know, reward with, I don't know, a toy car or a packet of sweets or whatever if you did well in exams' (Nigel, university Reader and son of a doctor), that they were 'on my case' and 'always saying "you've got to study", every day nagging me to do that' (Rebecca) or, quite simply and capturing the reproductive mindset that often paved the way for private schooling, that they 'wanted the best possible education' for them (Isabelle, NHS scientist and daughter of an NHS scientist and a teacher). Abby states that, being 'very, very interested in

---

[64] The terms 'institutional habitus' and 'familial habitus' have recently been introduced by Reay *et al.* (2005) to capture the expectations of educational institutions and families respectively, but I have serious reservations apropos these terms because they not only extend to the aggregate and substantialist level a relational and individual property but threaten to smother the complex of complementary and contradictory expectations conveyed by individuals, who after all have their own habitus and trajectories, within these domains of the lifeworld.

education', 'very, very pro our education' and 'concerned that I wasn't being stretched enough at my primary school' her mother would even ask her primary school – a small institution situated in Abby's rural Northern village of origin which she only attended until she was eight years old – to set homework for her even though no other child, invariably the offspring of poor local farmers, did any.

These described attitudes, exhortations and behaviours, as signifiers of the orientations to the world framing their early lifeworlds, inevitably sedimented into the interviewees' own perceptions, behaviour and orientations within the schooling system, furnishing a doxic intuition of what is 'normal', 'expected' or of 'what is done' in tune with the pedagogic ethos of the schooling system (disciplined study, etc.) – they were 'good kids' who always did their homework (Isabelle), 'worked hard' (Karen) and refrained from 'slacking off or messing around' (Nigel). Not only that, but because they had the mastery to succeed they all positively *enjoyed* schooling, talking enthusiastically about their favourite subjects and conceiving them as avenues for self-realisation – Jackie, for example, was and is 'passionate' about music and studied it from school right through university. This disposition toward schooling – this feeling 'at home' in the school environment (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979: 13) – is not, of course, *necessarily* exclusive to the dominant but could be held by dominated individuals as a product of some complex of idiosyncratic experience such as education-conscious parents or a drive to self-betterment (cf. Devine, 2004; Walkerdine *et al.*, 1999), yet it would yield less fruit if parents did not, at the same time, *transmit the ample cultural capital* – as early ability to master the academic abstraction of symbols and principles – to *fuel* it.

The Dominated

In opposition to the privileged inhabitants of social space, it was the relative *lack* of capital acquired from the early lifeworld and the corresponding habitus of both child and parent that profoundly shaped the experiences and assessments of schooling described by the dominated interviewees and that provided the founding stones upon which their subsequent social stasis or short-range trajectories would be built. This argument can be unpacked into a series of steps, beginning first of all with the foundational fact that none of the interviewees' parents, by virtue of their own educational trajectories, possessed much in the way of cultural capital.

Consequently, they did not possess the means – nor, given their relative proximity to economic urgency and their own assessment, based on a subjective expectation of objective probability (cf. Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 155ff), of the utility of education, the time or inclination – to prepare their child for the demands of the education system and to complement them at home (cf. Evans, 2007). There was not the help and involvement reported by the capital-rich interviewees, not the persistent encouragement and intervention, because their conditions of life dictated otherwise. Instead, parental input was generally, and often bluntly, described as non-existent.

Gary, for example, a driving instructor whose early life was described as one of relative penury (manifest in rotten carpets and an unkempt house) and disregard by his engineer[65] father and secretary mother who divorced in his mid-teens, simply stated that his parents 'didn't show a lot of interest in me in schooling' and did not 'push' him in any way. Similarly, Yvonne's parents – a young single mother working as a secretary and described as 'naïve' and a violent and largely absent father who was a 'jack of all trades' on the building site – provided 'Absolutely no involvement at all. Nothing. That's it. [...] I didn't have any support, I didn't have any direction. Even in my exams, I don't think my parents even knew what exams I was taking'. In fact Yvonne's mother had not even taught her basic reading and writing before she entered primary school – not because she could not, but because, deferring to the reproachful advice of teachers at a different school in the context of her own inabilities and lack of confidence on schooling of the kind that often mark a habitus deprived of cultural capital (cf. Reay, 1998a, 1998b; Lareau, 2000, 2003), she was doing what she thought the school required – which almost led to an early misdiagnosis of learning difficulties. This lack of involvement extends to even the younger members of the sample (Gary and Yvonne both went to school in the eighties, a period still safely within the range of the individualization thesis), despite recent moves amongst educational authorities to push parental involvement to the foreground (see Reay, 2005): Tina, an apprentice painter and decorator fresh out of school, declares that her parents – a bus driver and cleaner – 'weren't fussed' and 'didn't care' about her schooling and

---

[65] 'Engineer' is one of those elastic occupational labels that can cover a broad spectrum, from highly-skilled graduate-level professions to semi-skilled and routinised manual work (cf. Jackson and Marsden, 1962: 197). In Gary's case it referred to the latter.

that their input extended only so far as 'having a go at one of the teachers a few times' for allowing her to be mistakenly punished.

The consequence of all this is that the interviewees reported in this section were not equipped with the cultural capital or 'symbolic mastery' to succeed in school or conform to its demands and ethos. Alienated by a system that valorised what they had little of, that "gives training and information which can be fully received only by those who have had the training it does not give" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 128), many developed, in a way reminiscent of Willis' (1977) 'lads', oppositional attitudes based upon a vague valorisation and pursuance of what they did possess: *practical knowledge* or *bodily prowess*. This is most simply expressed as a displeasure and lack of interest in schooling, sometimes coupled with claims of being a 'bit of a tearaway' (Gary), or an assessment of it as a 'pointless waste of time' preventing them from engaging in something more 'practical and interesting' (Tina), but a fuller example is provided by Hannah, the daughter of a salesman and a house manageress for a charity. Having been brought into a lifeworld characterised by a distinct scarcity of cultural capital, insufficient economic capital to invest and a supportive but *laissez faire* parental disposition towards schooling, Hannah became, as she described it, 'disillusioned' with education. After portraying herself as not 'focussed on school', 'not very academic' and 'a bit of a rebel' who was often disruptive yet as someone who has 'done very well in lots of different aspects' and with 'a passion for certain things, albeit a lot of it wasn't academic' (in her case horses, initiated by contact with pony-owning cousins), when asked what would have improved her experience of school she reflects:

> [...] schools back then, they were purely academic to be honest and there probably wasn't an awful lot they could've done. Whereas now, the schools that they're trying to create now have got more vocational opportunities as well, so that would have been more suited to me but at the time that wasn't the structure of the school. [...] *I just got the impression that they just wanted the ones, were really bothered or really interested in the kids that keep their heads down and do well, which I suppose is what you should do when you're at school but not everybody does.* (emphasis added)

In other words, Hannah resented the focussed attention on those who 'kept their heads down and did well' – i.e. those with the instilled disposition towards self-disciplined study in harmony with the pedagogic practice of a schooling system hinged on the inculcation and nurturance of cultural capital – and vaunted the vocational, the *practical*, that which involves a skilled mastery divorced from the

symbolism and abstraction from which she had been excluded. This is, however, a valuation laced with internalised symbolic domination: on the one hand she is pleased that vocational training is being rolled out in schools, thereby unknowingly legitimating a sort of educational apartheid that seals the fate of children by channelling trajectories from a young age and perpetuating inequality, whilst on the other the dictates of symbolic violence – of seeing her own practice from the point of view of the dominant – means she immediately counters this with a hesitant recognition that self-disciplined study, the cultivation of capital, is what one '*should* do' at school, even if not everybody, including herself, manages to do this.

Similarly, having been questionably diagnosed with dyslexia after difficulties with reading and writing,[66] assigned to a raucous special needs class and labelled 'lazy and thick' and a 'failure' by teachers, Joe quickly turned away from and lost all interest in 'academic' matters at school and, like others of the sample in a similar position (particularly Gary and Phil), instead turned to sport, in particular running, which, coupled with his ability to 'look after himself', became his real source of 'self-motivation and pride' and 'respect within the school'; in short, school for him was 'not about learning, it [was] about *survival*' (emphasis added). The cultivation of the mind and engagement in academic abstraction, presupposing the possession of forms of knowledge he did not have as a product of his structured lifeworld, was thus supplanted with the cultivation of bodily aptitude and the investment of self-worth in the 'fighting strength' which Bourdieu (1984: 479) recognised as central to the system of values of (the male members of) the dominated class, the problem being that these do not accrue the resources translatable into symbolic capital, the keys capable of opening the doors of society.

Post-Sixteen Transitions: Doing 'the Natural Thing'

The Dominant

Having assimilated the cultural capital inhering in their surrounds and developed the dispositions endorsed and rewarded by the education system, nearly

---

[66] Joe believes he has now 'grown out of' his dyslexia insofar as the problems he had with reading and writing have now been completely overcome. Given that dyslexia is not actually a condition people 'grow out of', this raises the question of whether his diagnosis was in fact a *misdiagnosis* of an acute lack of cultural capital, and hence a naturalisation of educational inequality, in a way similar to Yvonne's experience of nearly being misdiagnosed with learning difficulties.

all of the dominant interviewees notched up multiple top marks in their O levels or GCSEs. Thus possessing the formal requirements to enrol in post-compulsory academic study, all but one[67] did just that. But whilst this institutionalised cultural capital may have opened the door to post-compulsory academic education, it remains to be answered *why* the interviewees opted to go through it. If we look at the rationalisations of this transition and responses to an attempt to probe the range of options considered the solution becomes clear quickly enough. When asked if they had considered not doing A levels and ceasing their schooling after GCSEs, all promptly answered in the negative, affirming that they were 'always gonna do A levels' (Karen) and that the prospect of dropping out was never broached in the familial environment or, especially for those at private school, amongst peers, teachers or careers advisors. Jackie, a 38-year-old, well-paid (forty-thousand pounds per annum) public-sector project manager who has only recently moved to Bristol from London, gives an exemplary account. Having been sent to a private primary school in her native Essex by her father, a skilled engineer turned manager in the automobile industry, she attended a 'lovely' grammar school and, when asked whether she had ever considered any route other than A levels, declared the following:

> Jackie: No, never considered it. Very few people didn't [do A levels]. People went to different places, some people went to sixth form college, or to technical college. One or two girls left, one girl left without doing any O levels, which everybody was just really shocked by. She left at sixteen, she said 'I'm not coming anymore, I don't have to go to school'. I couldn't believe her parents let her, I just couldn't believe it!
>
> WA: What do you think your parents would have done?
>
> Jackie: I think there'd have been a bit of a scene actually. I think there'd have been a horrible, horrible scene. It's difficult isn't it? I mean you can't force somebody of sixteen to go to school. I don't know what they'd have done. It was never – it just wouldn't have happened. So most, most people stayed on, and the employers in Southend, if you left school at sixteen looking for a job, were people like Access. So there were one or two people who did go, went into places like Access or Barclaycard, whatever it is now, and I think they did okay. I think they joined like school-leaver training programmes and worked their way up. But the majority of people stayed, and I think with a grammar school the majority of people stay. It's kind of expected you will, so you're not given a raft of options about what to do, it's kind of just assumed almost, that you'll stay.

---

[67] This exception is Oliver, an operations manager of a large company who left school at sixteen and took up an apprenticeship as an electrician, attaining his current occupation through multiple promotions, despite having teachers for parents. Unfortunately there is not the space to consider Oliver's interesting case in its full intricacy and make the case for the importance of class in it, but his acrimonious relationship with his father, his self-declared disenchantment with school and other idiosyncratic experiences characteristic of his lifeworld (e.g. his small-town environs, work experience with an electrician) are likely to have played their part in forming his deviant trajectory rather than some new-found reflexivity. In the following discussion of trajectories his case has been bracketed.

She is, nevertheless, quick to add, 'I mean it's different, it's twenty-odd years ago': people are 'more aware of situations now', she claims, and 'move around a lot more', seemingly bearing testament to the awareness and consideration of alternative scenarios previously discounted central to Beck's version of individualization. However, since her account is mirrored by the younger interviewees as well – a part of a generation of advantaged students statistically more likely to study A levels than ever before (see *Social Trends*, 2006: 39; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007: 28–9) – any claim to generational differences, and support for the German theorist's thesis, weakens. Isabelle, for example, at just twenty-six, describes her own much more recent decision-making process in the transition from her private all-girls school to a mixed-sex sixth form at a different institution and captures in a sentence the underlying reality in all cases:

> WA: So did you consider not doing A levels?
>
> Isabelle: Not really I suppose, no. But I suppose it was just that pretty much everyone in my school was gonna go and do A levels and I also had the prospect of going to this school that I knew I was going to have a really good time. So *it just seemed like the natural thing, I don't think it really ever crossed my mind*, although friends that I had out of school weren't all going to do A levels, but they were all going into some sort of further training or study or something so, yeah don't think it was ever really an issue. (emphasis added)

In other words, the continuation of education (or 'training') was 'the natural thing' to do given the resources inhering in one's position and the expectations and exhortations filtering into a lifeworld rich with cultural capital. In stark contrast to Beck's thesis, *there was little 'reflexivity' here at all*, for no other options ever 'crossed her mind', i.e. they were excluded *a priori* from consciousness as unthinkable given the field of possible trajectories open and the dispositions toward academic study instilled. This is brought home all the more by Jackie's shock and incredulity, seen above, at the contemporary who rebuffed schooling and left at sixteen – the exception, so to speak, that proves the rule or, more accurately, the habitus.

Vitally, the self same process saw each and every dominant interviewee (bar Oliver) proceed on after A levels (or their equivalent in different national contexts) through the increasingly central sanctifier of social division: higher education (cf. Reay *et al.*, 2005). The same language abounds, with respondents reporting that they 'never' considered anything other than university and that entering directly into the world of work 'wasn't an option' (Rebecca); that they

were 'always going to go to university' and that, in words analogous to Isabelle's on A levels, 'it was kind of natural progression to' (Mark, computer programmer and son of a university professor and teacher); that it was something they simply 'assumed' they would do (Jackie) and that they even 'filled in the application form without thinking of alternatives' (Nigel). The interviewees' own proffered explanations for this suite of assumptions hinge upon the prevalent expectations of the 'normal' amongst family, peers and the private school – 'everyone in my family had gone' or 'everyone at my school went' were frequent refrains – all of which, they were keen to point out in response to probing, were never *explicitly* stated but encrypted in the discursive and practical parameters of their lifeworlds:

> Claire: [university] was always [my parents'] plan, so. It was never put to me as in 'you're going' [...] It was also sort of 'well when you're at university...' things like that so, it was kind of like that but no it wasn't 'you're going'.
>
> Nigel: It's funny, I don't ever remember having a discussion about that [whether I would go to university or not]. Any discussion of that type would probably have been more along 'what do you think you'll do at university' or 'I'm thinking of doing this at university, what do you think?', you know. So it sounds as if it was pretty hardwired in there.
>
> Abby: No, no one ever said to me 'you will go to university and that's that'.[...] I mean I think I got some good advice from school, it wasn't like 'academic and earn a lot of money', it was like 'you enjoy languages so maybe you'd like to do a degree in languages'. Wasn't kind of 'and that will give you this and this job', it was more based on your enjoyment in a subject and what was fulfilling to you.

From the very start these interviewees were, in other words, surrounded by the expectation – furtively manifest in the sayings and doings of daily life and enabled only by the possession of capital – that higher education, the means of securing reproduction, was not just within the bounds of the probable, but was the *norm*, a 'commonplace destiny' and 'natural' future (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979: 3–4), thus *unreflexively* fixing it within their own perceptions of the time to come and their conscious projects even if, as Abby's statement conveys, this is often garbed in the Beckian discourse of self-realisation. Cultural capital is key, of course, in setting the subjective perceptions of the possible and typical – being seen and seeing themselves as 'academic', i.e. in possession of symbolic mastery, the environs and intellectual challenges of university-level education 'felt right' (Jackie) – but the undoubted role of other forms of capital must never be forgotten. There was, after all, enough *economic* capital in each case to allow the distance from exigency necessary for the suspension of paid employment and even, in several

cases (where parents or other family members were especially affluent), enough to cover living expenses and pull university even further in to the realm of feasibility.

The Dominated

In contrast, none of the interviewees from the dominated section of social space completed post-compulsory education. Instead, and in line with national statistical patterns (see *Social Trends*, 2006: 39–42), apprenticeships and full-time employment, after some false starts and initial periods of claiming unemployment benefits, were their destinations[68] and, once again unfavourably to those heralding the spread of classless reflexivity, the journey there was undertaken along classed tracks. Sometimes, for example, there was an explicit perception of the capital constraints inscribed in their position. Thus many of the interviewees, when queried whether they had considered staying on at school or college or even pursuing higher education, simply said they were 'not brainy enough' for A levels (Tina), that it was 'never an option' because they didn't have the 'top marks' that were perceived to be necessary (Trisha) or that university was 'beyond them' as 'only clever people' went there (Gary). Then again, even if they had possessed the cultural capital and the attendant grades to proceed on to post-compulsory education, the restrictions of economic capital would have blocked their paths. Phil, for example, though declaring that he wasn't 'bright enough' to pursue higher education, states that he 'couldn't afford not to work' anyway, whilst Trisha, a rural-born trans-gendered technician whose father was an industrious electrician and whose mother worked as a cleaner, claimed her parents simply 'couldn't afford' university and that

> the only reason I stayed on [at college] to get an ONC was through my work, and even then I had to pay for it by staying on very low wages for three years – or two years extra than what the normal was. And that was the only way I was able to pay for that.

---

[68] In parallel to Oliver's deviant trajectory, there was one interviewee amongst the dominated respondents who had treaded a different path: Dave, who has been a lorry driver for most of his working life, with short periods of managerial work, studied A levels and attended university. Regrettably, again, there is not the space to dissect this fully, but suffice to say the influence of class nevertheless looms large: Dave's mother possessed more credentials than any other dominated interviewee's parent, and his attendance of grammar school inculcated the kind of expectations seen amongst the dominated. However, at university Dave *came up against the limits of his capital* and *dropped out* in the face of poor grades, inability to succeed and money problems.

Such recognised constraints, as an articulated sense of limits, are not, however, the prime mechanisms in the negotiation of school-work transitions, as if the interviewees had reflexively considered all options and acknowledged the restrictions of their situation, even for those who mention them. Instead, the movement into work was guided by the pre-reflexive expectations, orientations and valuations of the habitus, which is to say the constraints and limits of capital *internalised* as a product of recurrent experiences in the materially and culturally structured lifeworld. Such experiences emanate from two interweaving sources: on the one hand, the expectations amongst the consociates and institutions of the lifeworld that permeate everyday life, themselves grounded in the largely tacit assessment of what is reasonable given the levels and composition of capital etched into the situation, and on the other hand the anti-educational attitudes, described above, which were produced by the individual's educational performance and trajectory given their limits of capital (which Bourdieu would term *amor fati* – an induced 'love' of one's fate).

In its most basic guise, the expectations, interactions and experiences characteristic of the lifeworld as structured by its relational position in social space impact upon trajectories through the medium of parental advice or directives articulated to a greater or lesser degree (but certainly absorbed by the interviewees), and based on their own experience and assessment of the sensible, the achievable, the practical and the 'normal' given their positions and trajectories in social space, to 'get a trade' (Joe) or 'go into an apprenticeship' (Phil). Sometimes, however, this also shades over from parental expectations to the broader doxic features of the lifeworld:

> Yvonne: [my parents' attitude was] I was to finish school and become a secretary cos *that's what girls did.*
>
> WA: You got that impression?
>
> Yvonne: Absolutely. That's what my sister was told to do and that's what I was [...] (emphasis added)

> Trisha: You either went to college or you went into work. Well I was just expected to go into work.
>
> WA: By your parents?
>
> Trisha: By my parents and *by society really. It was just one of the natural things that everybody else did.* (emphasis added)

The additions 'that's what girls did', 'by society really' and – mirroring the scenario witnessed amongst the privileged – 'it was just one of the natural things that everybody else did' all reveal a perception, brought to the level of discourse only by probing, of the structures of normality furnished by the experiential milieu in which they lived their lives. Secretarial work was not what all girls did, but what all girls within Yvonne's parents' orbit of experience, that is, girls with a certain level of cultural and economic capital, did;[69] it was not 'society', in the sense of a national ethos, that expected Trisha, who was from an economically and culturally homogeneous rural area, to enter work, and it was not what everyone, i.e. the whole population, did, but it was what 'society' *as she perceived it* within a particular materially-articulated *Umwelt* expected and what people *within her experiential reach* – i.e. people of a similar position – did.

In most cases, such lifeworld experiences operate to feed, supplement, complement and consolidate the negative valuation of the utility, difficulty and displeasure of education brought forward from the experiences of schooling. This orientation, ingrained into the habitus, is manifest in Joe's assessment of education as being not only uninteresting (particularly compared to his enthusiasm for running) but a 'waste of time' in his account of the fact that he had attempted to stay on at his school's sixth form purely in order to prolong the support he received for his running but

> realised within two weeks that it wasn't gonna work for me. I thought 'no, let's chip off and get a job' [...] I thought 'no, I'm just going to *waste two years here* putting energies into stuff *I'm not really interested in*, so let's get out there and do something'. (emphasis added)

Similarly, Tina, having been far from enamoured with school, voiced her assessment of continuing education:

> I don't wanna learn, I can't be bothered. I don't see the point in spending a long time doing something you're not going to do ever again, which is what ninety-nine percent of people do. Yeah, it's a waste of time.

In a vivid display of facets of the dominated habitus, she articulates the negative perception of learning as a *chore* given the difficulties inherent in a position and familial life marked by minimal cultural capital and as *unpractical* ('a waste of time') given its distance from the realities of working life, i.e. from *necessity* –

---

[69] There are obvious intersections with the effects of gender here as well: Yvonne was expected to be a secretary rather than, say, a bricklayer, because 'that's what *girls* did'.

there is no 'love of learning' as there was amongst those distant from the demands of economic necessity.

Interestingly, most of these classed trajectories occurred under either Conservative or New Labour governments and, hence, have been contextualised by an education system oriented by political discourses of choice, marketisation, personal responsibility and 'negotiated individual learning plans' (see Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Hatcher, 1998: 20; Ball *et al.*, 2000; Ball, 2008) – exactly the kind of political context that Beck would argue individualizes school-work transitions. This does not mean that such policy measures have had no social consequences, however, or even that these consequences do not resemble processes identified by Beck. Indeed, Tina's transition into an apprenticeship in painting and decorating, extensively recalled because it occurred so recently and remains fresh in her memory, appears to exhibit the hallmarks of institutionally-aided reflexivity consonant with the theses of both Beck and Giddens:

> Tina: I went through a stage where I liked drawing, so I thought 'well what about painting?' I like drawing, and being creative, I thought I'd do that and then I can move on and perhaps be an interior designer or sommat like that. I ain't now, but that was the plan. That kinda went out the window.
>
> WA: So was this something you thought much about?
>
> Tina: I thought about it for about a month.
>
> WA: Did you look at lots of information?
>
> Tina: Yeah, mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm [indicating looking through all the options]. I thought 'yeah this seems quite good'. Then I found out about the apprenticeship. How did I find out about the apprenticeship? I've no idea, but I found out about the apprenticeship. Oh I did it through school, through their Connexions person.
>
> WA: So the school had a lot of information?
>
> Tina: Yeah, they had a sort of, basically set it all up. Set me up with an interview over there, and all that lot.

There is, in this passage, evidence of Tina selecting her occupational trajectory on the basis of an *interest* (what would, in other words, be 'best for her' and aid some sense of self-realisation) rather than any obvious exhortation, expectation or aspiration to follow family traditions, of an emergence of a consciously-conceived *plan* for the future (interior design) which has had to be revised, of a *diversity* of options and information supplied by organisations specifically instituted for the purpose of broadening (and demanding) individual 'choice' (Connexions) and of a

concentrated and elaborated *deliberation* of these options until the final decision was taken.

It is, however, as edifying to consider the occupations she did examine in her deliberations as those she did *not* – she contemplated being a builder, a plasterer, a bricklayer and (her first love given first-hand experience) a butcher, working through each option and discounting it on the basis of implicit and explicit, embodied and symbolic constraints of gender (she was 'not strong enough' for the jobs or could not do them because she was 'a girl'), at all stages overtly rejecting what were constructed to be 'what everybody else did', that is, what *girls like her*, with stocks of capital like her, were perceived to do: 'office work' or 'shop work'. But for precisely the class-based 'because motives' already described she *never considered university* and she *never considered a profession*: they were *excluded from consciousness* and simply did not enter her deliberations or her (swiftly crushed) life plans – which are both merely a demonstration of mundane consciousness and projection exactly as described in Chapter 4, even if contextualised by a milieu of amplified information – as realistic possibilities. Her choice, in other words, was 'reflexive' in Beck's sense only up to a point: she did seek to do something 'interesting', 'different' and 'creative' – but *only within the limits carved out by the pre-reflexive assumptions of her capital-structured habitus*.

Other interviewees conveyed similar realities: the *precise* occupation or trade taken up, following the decline of extractive and manufacturing industries, were not obviously steered by local or family tradition, as in hackneyed (but not untrue) images of sons following fathers down mines in earlier times, but worked out on a more contingent basis, with interviewees often saying they were 'unsure', balancing options (such as work as a bank clerk or as a skilled tradesman for Phil) or doing what they 'wanted' to do given the inclinations generated by idiosyncratic lifeworld experiences – *yet pursuing work or an apprenticeship was still the 'natural thing' to do*. So there may be a new context, more options, more information and a discourse of individual choice pervading the policies and practices of schools such that occupational futures have become 'clouds of possibilities to be thought about and negotiated' as 'the deep layer of foreclosed decisions is being forced up into the level of decision making' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 6), but the information considered, the possibilities perceived

and the individual decisions enacted remain grounded in the orientations furnished by capital, that is to say, by class (cf. Ball *et al.*, 2000; Lehmenn, 2007).

Social Inertia in Social Space

Thus far the interviewees have disclosed life courses somewhat at odds with Beck's (1992: 93) thesis that education involves simply 'choosing and planning one's own educational life course' and, whilst recognising social change, confirm the theoretical statement advanced in Chapter 3 that this hallowed institution, which the German social theorist describes as a critical device in the genesis of individualized agents, is in fact a pivotal instrument in the reproduction of class inequality. But what of life after education? Is it possible that, notwithstanding their classed paths through their school days and post-sixteen options, social conditions conducive to individualization – such as heightened workplace insecurity – have intervened in the interviewees' subsequent trajectories in social space, prompted widespread reflexivity and reduced the effects of accumulated capital to nought?

The Dominant

Amongst the dominant interviewees, there is much that, at first, lends credence to the declarations of Beck and Giddens. Most of them, for example, have experienced considerable geographically mobility through the course of their post-education years, continuing a tendency set in motion by the initial spatial relocation to university and, moreover, for many of them this has burst the bounds of the British Isles' watery borders and carried them across the globe – Abby has taught in both Italy and France; Rebecca, of Canadian origin, worked in Japan and travelled South Asia before arriving in the UK ten years ago; Claire has travelled South America extensively; and so on. In this respect it would appear that these individuals have indeed been 'disembedded' and distanced from their original experiential milieu, as Beck claims to be the case, and, taking advantage of the augmented politico-economic and transportation linkages between nations said to characterise globalisation, exposed to a multiplicity of forms of life, their lifeworlds thus becoming marked by the kind of 'contextual discontinuity', as

Margaret Archer calls it, that supposedly weakens the hold of early experiences and instils a classless reflexivity.

To add further weight to the case for individualization, there are, in some cases, instances where the opportunities afforded in the occupational sphere by accumulated capital are *foregone* in favour of attempts to subordinate paid employment to or conflate it with lifestyle pursuits – in Claire's case, for example, the reliance on spurts of temporary work after university solely to fund travelling, and for Mark, willingness to take voluntary and low-pay conservation or holiday camp work despite his possession of a degree in geography in a bid to immerse himself in his interest in 'the outdoors'. Moreover, some interviewees' occupational histories have been marred by endemic insecurity, punctuated by redundancies of the ilk claimed to prompt reflexive self-awareness and scramble classed patterns of life chances or disjointed by active job shifts in search of contentment, with some seizing on opportunities to retrain through workplace or 'lifelong learning' schemes which presuppose and encourage a flexible and reflexive workforce (cf. Edwards *et al.*, 2002).

Take, for example, Jackie, who after her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in music, her real 'passion', worked for a music publishers and the Tate gallery before then embarking on an MBA and shifting careers into personal assistance and 'knowledge management' in the private and public sector – a trajectory in social space that veered from the left over to the right – until that was cut short by redundancy. Similarly, after her degree in languages and several years of travelling and temporary work Claire retrained in accountancy and worked through promotions to become a senior manager at a business services firm; whilst Abby, having spent several years as a secondary level teacher and working up to department head, is considering retraining into a new profession under the understanding that teaching is not, as it was for her mother a generation earlier, a 'job for life' given the constant perceived threat of redundancy, and indeed that career shifts are 'almost expected' nowadays as 'people are willing to take more risks'.

These facts alone are not enough to corroborate individualization and increased reflexivity: what is needed is insight into the principle of action *underlying* these various moves and trajectories and whether, more specifically, reflexivity as Beck or Giddens describe it is evident. The initial outlook is,

ostensibly, favourable to the two detractors of class: deliberation, planning and negotiation, all in the quest for what is best 'for me', seem rife. To give just three prominent examples: Jackie claims that she and her partner had 'thought about', 'plotted' and 'talked about' moving to Bristol from London 'for years', primarily on the basis of its perceived 'lifestyle' benefits – i.e. its reduced demand for commuting and hence greater opportunity for leisure time, as well as its classical and chamber music facilities (groups, orchestras, etc.) – and that it was her redundancy that prompted the move by presenting an 'opportunity'; Rebecca's decisions to move first to Japan, which meant ceasing her degree studies at that time, and then to London instead of staying in Canada both involved extended deliberation and negotiation of alternatives (she was 'torn', 'stressed' and 'confused') in a bid to determine what was best for her; and Karen's decisions to take up medicine rather than teaching after graduating in psychology and to become a GP in particular in order to balance her career with her desire for a family were carefully considered and planned – after all, she 'always thinks a lot about everything' – in an effort to pursue what she 'enjoys' and 'loves', namely 'looking after people'.

All these findings, then, would seem favourable to the theses of Beck and Giddens on reflexivity, life-planning and lifestyle adoption. Unfortunately for these two thinkers, however, things are not so simple. The fact of the matter is, behind each and every biographical event in the dominants' life courses lurks the continuing effects of structures of class difference in the guise of the pre-reflexive dispositions of the dominant habitus adapted to the enablements of capital. To begin with the instances of national and international mobility – which, it must be stressed, is almost completely lacking amongst the *dominated* interviewees[70] – whilst it is true, to give Beck and Giddens their due, that this involves the seizing of opportunities opened up by a new social context, such moves are ultimately enabled *only by the possession of convertible capital* and, hence, the perception that such moves are within the realms of the possible. Abby, for example, could not have taken her teaching positions in France and Italy if she was not conversant in the host languages and in possession of enough economic capital to move (air fares, etc.) and subsist (her affluent father paid her living expenses through Italy), and

---

[70] The only trips abroad for them, mentioned by very few, were in the form of infrequent and inexpensive holidays.

likewise Rebecca needed considerable cultural and economic capital to take up her teaching post in Japan. At the same time, furthermore, it would seem as if the dominants' mobility, or 'disembedding', is also guided by an extant *disposition toward contextual discontinuity*. Rebecca provides an extreme but clear example: her early experience, enabled by a capital-rich lifeworld, of transnational travel – being born in England whilst her father studied for a PhD, moving to Canada at a young age, having a set of grandparents in Barbados and another from Scandinavia – instilled a disposition reflexively grasped and discursively articulated as an 'interest in other cultures and countries', a sense of never being 'grounded' (or 'embedded' in a spatial locale) and a desire to travel. However, amongst less travelled interviewees it is still likely that an expectation of or openness to mobility, so much less evident amongst the dominated, has been produced by not only the initial relocation to university, which would have sedimented (variably) into the habitus as a protention that 'I can do it again', as Husserl and Schutz would say, but, given the fact that attending university was, as seen above, written into the orienting expectations of their lifeworlds, an early milieu that effectively *prepared them for, i.e. induced in the temporal structures of the habitus, the prospect of disembedding from the very start*. Disembedding, contextual discontinuity and spatial mobility were, in other words, lodged within the natural attitude as expectable, likely, typical and normal alongside higher education, raising difficult questions for Beck as to the extent to which disembedding, far from being a removal from class structures and patterns of practice, is itself a highly classed phenomenon.

The occupational beginnings of Claire and Mark – which, it should be pointed out, only occupied a relatively brief period in their trajectories, were eventually supplanted by commitments to conventional professional careers and were unusual compared to the immediate post-university devotion to well-paid professional occupations amongst the majority of the dominant – can also be seen in a similar light: rather than being a foregoing of the opportunities furnished by capital, their attempts to subordinate or conflate their employment with leisure pursuits were in fact *made possible only by the distance from necessity they enjoyed*. Mark, for example, states that

> my parents have never been short of money. Always say, they've always been there to help out with the university and, when in Bristol [doing low-pay jobs] *they've always been there as a fall back*. (emphasis added)

Furthermore, whilst the perceived insecurities at work are real enough (though not generalisable beyond the interviewees) the redundancies and endeavours at retraining, and the decisions that underlie them, only make full sense when set against the capital context in which they occurred. Jackie's move to Bristol, for instance, was only possible given the 'generous' payout from her redundancy, and the occasions of retraining are contextualised by the possession of enough economic capital and cultural capital to ensure, once again, the 'I-can-do-it-again' perception – Abby could 'perhaps' afford the substantial costs of doing another degree, but 'certainly another year' of training and, implied in her consideration of it as a realistic possibility, perceives herself as *able* to cultivate further cultural capital.

All this points to the most important conclusion of all: the 'reflexivity' displayed by the dominant – the weighing up of options and the search for self-actualisation – is no more than the mundane consciousness of those distant from the exigencies of material necessity in a new social context. Yes, as Beck and the others would no doubt argue, the expansion of lifelong learning initiatives, the increased dominance of erratic market forces in a neo-liberal climate and the augmentation of global politico-economic and techno-communication linkages inevitably shape the situations faced, the options open and deliberated and that which is perceived as achievable. But, at the same time, the situations, options and perceived possibles within this social landscape remain differentiated by position in social space. In a nutshell, the *substance* of dominant class practices may have altered (increased transnational travel, retraining etc), but the *relational* circumstances supplying their conditions of possibility (capital, habitus) remain unchanged.

The Dominated

In order to validate this argument fully, however, comparison must be drawn with the dominated, for if an unfettered reflexivity detached from their relational conditions of existence floods their lives then the diminished significance of class could still be declared. On first sight, traces of the themes described by both Beck and Giddens can be discerned in the dominated interviewees' accounts

of their occupational history. Most of them, like the dominant, discussed occasions of active, deliberated choice and change regarding their present and future trajectories and, what is more, some of these even bore the hallmarks of 'reflexivity' in the Beckian sense of taking *oneself* as the focal point of life decisions. So Phil tells of his relocation from Plymouth, the city that played host to his childhood and adolescence, after acquiring new employment there, repeatedly using language indicative of the quest for self-realisation (what 'I' want) and self-determination ('I' decided) at the heart of individualization (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 26):

> within six months I knew it weren't right *for me*, it was like *I don't wanna be doing this*, it's just pipe-fitting, things like that. So I've had a big experience with that, which is quite good, you know. I thought 'no, *I don't want this*'. I was married at the time, I had one kiddie and one was on the way, and I had a mother-in-law who was most interfering and *I decided* the only real way to sort this out was to move away from Plymouth and reduce the influence of mother-in-law on my wife. (all emphases added)

Similarly, Gary's venture into self-employed driver instructing, abandoning the franchise under whose auspices he had been operating for several years, was prompted by him 'looking at his options' and 'deciding the time was right', with his current practice guided by the maxim, a prosaic articulation of the notion of reflexivity, that

> you have to come out of yourself every now and again to see where you're going and what you can do to improve [...]

In some cases, the social root from which such reflexive episodes stem seem to have been the variety of 'personal trouble' such as divorce or redundancy that, according to Beck, have proliferated and spread across all sectors of society in reflexive modernity. For Joe, after his divorce and the subsequent collapse of his employment in the emotional fallout, he

> just thought 'right, okay, I'd better *search for what I want*, get on a path and hope to find something'. And *I made a decision I wanted* to get into building maintenance, and then started searching for roles like that.

For others, it was redundancy that struck and, in Gary's and Dave's cases and favourable to Beck's and Bauman's thoughts on the new volatility of social hierarchies given the caprices of global capitalism, dislodged them from the managerial positions they had managed to acquire, and hence the routines and experiential hubs they had established, and prompted them to turn back on themselves in order to actively create new ones:

Dave: So for the first time in my life I found myself actually without a job, and course I still had my [HGV] license so I just did a bit of agency work for a while. You can always get agency work, just like that, pick up the phone and got offers coming in. And then I thought 'well know what, I'll try a bit of foreign continental work' – always fancied that you know, like going overseas. So did that for a couple of years, went all over Europe – Spain, France, Italy, even went down to Kosovo, supplied the British army down there.

Gary: In an ideal world I probably would [still] be a manager of an ice rink now and on good money, very good money, and bonus and all the rest of it. But because the path was cut off at that point [because of redundancy], then I was on the [metaphorical] road again, 'where do I go now? Where do I go now? Where do I go now? Come to the roundabout, I've got A, B, C or D, or exit one, two, three, four – which one do I take? Right, let's try one and let's go on and see what happens'.

In short, Dave, Gary, Joe and the others give the impression that, in Bauman's terminology, they have been forced to remould themselves and maintain flexibility in the face of fluid social structures and transient bonds, and it is, Beck would no doubt claim, the individual 'I', not what local or familial tradition or significant others dictate, that takes centre stage, assesses the options and enacts decisions in all cases.

As with the dominant, however, this is not the whole story, for these apparently pro-individualization findings can be countered and qualified, and the importance of class reasserted, by observation of the twin sources of social inertia: capital objectified and capital embodied (Bourdieu, 1984: 110). On the one hand a whole host of consciously experienced constraints of objectified capital – money, goods, credentials – barring movement within social space can be paraded, such as Joe's inability to afford a college course on air conditioning and refrigeration given the low economic capital marking out his position, setting his projected goals evermore distant in the future, Hannah's resignation to a routine administrative job demanding less creativity and imagination than she would like because she needs to 'pay the bills', or Andy's exclusion from a desired occupation (housing officer) on the basis of his dearth of qualifications (institutionalised cultural capital). On the other hand, and much more importantly, there is the underlying principle of action in the first place, including the principle of those 'reflexive' actions examined above. For actions, choices and trajectories are not forged by decontextualised and 'antecedentless' agents (cf. Bourdieu, 1990a: 42–51), even if, to give Beck his due, it appears agents are forced by contemporary social conditions, such as the increase in divorce rates and proliferation of family forms and the decline of lifelong

employment,[71] to formulate more explicit 'choices' throughout their trajectories than before. Instead, contrary to Bauman's (2002: 193) facetious claims that individual skills and 'habits' (or dispositions) melt away with the vagaries of flexible employment contracts and that agents are somehow extricated from 'the legacy of their past' (2004: 116), the underlying principle of choice and decision is the individual's habitus, as an accumulated personal experiential history lived through a social context determined by position in social space, such that whilst there may be deliberation or the need for explicit decision-making in any given biographical situation, this is, in all cases, founded on a pre-reflexive assessment of the practicable given the capital resources, skills and experience sedimented in the various levels of knowledge over the course of a life. As with Tina's contemplation of her future career, in other words, present thought on future possibles – induced by some specific conjunction of experience, be it accreted dissatisfaction or rapid redundancy or divorce – is conducted *within limits* as the options that enter mundane consciousness and the weights attached to them are circumscribed by the classed past. Furthermore, unlike Tina, whose subjectively projected field of possibles was filled with an array of more or less homologous options given the discourse of choice present in the school context, for older interviewees the horizons of this field are narrowed in accordance with the particular range of skills already accumulated.

So, for example, Dave and Joe, prompted by the unforeseen disintegration of their employment, opted for occupational roles – long-haul lorry driving and building maintenance respectively – for which they *already had* declarative and procedural knowledge and even credentials because of the classed trajectories they had travelled since school. They may have been forced to rethink their situation, but that thought process and its outcome, and hence their future social positions, were bounded by the tacit sense of the achievable and 'sensible' given not just the broad resources inhering in their position in social space but their specific cognitive and corporeal possessions. Likewise, when Phil left his pipe-fitting job – it was

---

[71] Whilst the statistics are unequivocally supportive of the thesis that divorce, remarriage and hence family forms mushroomed in the UK in the latter part of the twentieth century (see e.g. *Social Trends*, 2007: chap. 2), due in good measure to the Divorce Reform Act 1969, there is much more dissension over the supposed decline of 'jobs for life' because of the over-exaggeration of either the prevalence of lifelong jobs in the past for the dominated or their current decline amongst all sectors. In any case, as already noted in Chapter 3, redundancy remains a fate disproportionately faced by the less advantaged.

'not for him', incidentally, only given the fact that the 'technical capital' (Bourdieu, 2005) he had accrued on his apprenticeship in plant engineering had fostered higher expectations from his work (it was 'just' pipe-fitting) – he took up similar work to that which he had been trained for before eventually moving, like his father before him, to supervisory level. Other examples include Gary's current consideration of a move away from driver instructing, which he sees as an inherently unstable occupation, to driver *examining* where the same constellation of skills are deployed; Andy's moves from graphic designer to cartoonist, DJ, screen printer and studio manager, often prompted by the insecurities characteristic of the kind of work open to those in the lower reaches of social space, which have all been underpinned by a commitment to and knowledge of specific popular (and hence dominated) musical forms (e.g. punk, hip-hop, dance); and Frank's surrendering of his self-employment as a central heating fitter in the face of rising customer expectations (he 'thought stuff it') to become a technician at the local hospital which involved a transferral of skills already accrued.

Even where a more disjunctive shift of occupation occurs, not only does it remain locked within the same area of social space but objectified and embodied capital continue to exert their conjoined force. A case in point is Gary who, when he was displaced from his managerial position and propelled into the job centre, was 'strapped' for options in owing to constraints of cultural capital:

> I was strapped for – I didn't know what to do. The problem is I left school not very articulate, and I didn't do many exams, I didn't enjoy school so therefore I suffered on exams, and I regret that because obviously it's made life harder for me. But yeah it was just a case of 'yeah right let's go down the job centre, let's see what's on advert.' And I didn't wanna work in a shop, I didn't wanna work in a, mechanically or engineering cos I didn't have the qualifications for that anyway, so it really limited what I was able to do anyway.

However, having vaunted his 'communication skills' throughout the interview, explicitly and implicitly indicating them to be a product largely of his experiences dealing with all manner of people in his various managerial and non-managerial roles at the ice rink at which he had spent a large portion of his working life, Gary tried his hand at occupations within his restricted field of possibles consonant with this perceived ability – first as a police officer, but then when that fell through on account of colour-blindness, as a driving instructor. His own summation of this latter move, pithily condensing the intersection of his stock of capital, his self-identified dispositional possessions (communication, patience) and the composition

of the national (and local) job market – driving instruction being one of those service sector jobs that has proliferated in recent years – was that

> the reason why I became a driving instructor was, if you like, that was *all that I could fit into at that particular moment in time*. I'm not so sure there's much else I could do now unless I went back to what I was doing before that. (emphasis added)

Though he did not transfer *specific* occupational skills like those mentioned above, therefore, he still drew on a broad set of transposable dispositions acquired from his occupational experiences and selected a vocation which, given his sedimented past experience and range of realistic possibles, he could 'fit in to'. Hence he may indeed have been 'on the road again' and at the 'roundabout' of choice, to use the terms in which he conveyed his redundancy earlier, but the available exits from the roundabout were clearly circumscribed by his position and trajectory in social space from the start.

Social Space Travellers: the Upwardly Mobile

Amongst the dominant and dominated alike, then, it appears that, inauspiciously for the individualization theorists, the relational effects of class and the social reproduction and stasis they bring persist within the social context of the new millennium. Yet such reproduction is not total, for amongst the interviewees there exists a small but not insignificant collection of individuals who, despite beginning life in the dominated sector of social space, ascended into more privileged positions through the course of their educational and occupational trajectories. This is not, as cruder critics of Bourdieu-inspired analyses imply (e.g. Goldthorpe, 2007c), somehow antithetical to the late thinker's perspective on class or, consequently, the phenomenologically fine-tuned version of it employed here. Indeed, as is amply demonstrated by his various passages on the changing locations of agents within the social space through individual investment and conversion of capital and the shifting preponderance and reward of particular occupational groups, and his factoring in of trajectory as the third dimension of social space to capture all of this, mobility is not only allowed for but *built into the very definition of class*. Of course the *extent* of social mobility is always an empirical question, and statistically the prevailing finding would seem to be that whilst attendance and performance in post-16 education and higher education, the chief channels of

upward mobility, has moderately increased in absolute terms amongst even the lowest sections of social space in the last thirty years or so to match the expansion of the education system, the *relative* rates of participation, that is, the differential odds of attendance between positions in social space, have remained largely unchanged (see Archer *et al.*, 2003; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007: 27–30).[72] Nevertheless, a crucial curiosity is posed: what makes the upwardly mobile so different from the rest of those hailing from dominated positions? How do they manage to escape the common fate of their initial social neighbours and, importantly, do the kind of conditions described by Beck, Bauman and Giddens play any part by, for example, prompting some form of constraint-surmounting reflexivity?

Initially, it would seem as if there is little if anything to separate the early conditions of life of the upwardly mobile and those who remain in the dominated sections of social space, with residential milieus described using much the same vocabulary: if not red-brick railway terraces, post-war council houses or 1930s semis in 'depressed', 'poor' or 'grey' city areas pock-marked by lewd graffiti and populated by manual workers of varying standing, the unemployed or even drug addicts (Lisa, Paul, Samuel, Zack), then poor rural life (Bernadette, Tessa). Their childhoods were perceived to be framed by a relative paucity of economic means – money was 'tight' (Lisa, Tessa, Zack), they had 'much less' money than their peers (Bernadette), were thus 'aware of money' as children and had to modify their behaviour (e.g. which shops they frequented) accordingly (Samuel), and recreational goods enjoyed by other children, such as the celebrated Rubix cube, had to be foregone (Lisa) – and none of their parents had attended university or offered any notable help with homework – with, for example, Tessa, a junior doctor and daughter to a lorry driver and disabled mother, noticing that because her parents were 'not academic' they offered less assistance with schoolwork than those of members of her cohort with more capital. Yet all proceeded through A levels, with this path being considered not only possible or achievable, but in some cases, much like the dominant, as almost a *foregone conclusion*. As Tessa puts it, she was 'always going to do' A levels, 'there was no question about it' for Samuel,

---

[72] Though there is not the space to pursue it fully here, Goldthorpe (2007c) is wrong to clam that Bourdieu's perspective is unable to handle relative rates of mobility instead of absolute rates – though perhaps at odds with the causal model underlying the statistical procedure, Bourdieu's relational definition of class fits with the study of relative rates quite well.

a doctor whose father worked as a prison officer and whose mother was a housewife, whilst Zack – a software engineer whose mother claimed disability benefit and whose step-father was an unsuccessful self-employed water-filler seller – claims it was 'expected' that he would continue education after GSCE level.

Not only that, but, for all but one (Paul)[73] of the upwardly mobile, *university* was always within their range of possibles too, presented to them as a realisable goal which, with advice from the school, in competition with other options and driven by what would be 'best for them' (In Zack's words, searching for what 'I wanted to do' and what 'took my fancy'), they either took for granted within the natural attitude or mulled in mundane consciousness. For Samuel, for example, there was again 'no question about it', and both he and Tessa considered a variety of options – such as teacher, scientist, occupational therapist – that assumed university education, even if the specific courses pursued were subject to balanced pragmatic considerations of job prospects, perceived aptitudes and what they found 'interesting' before the guidance of the school intervened and turned them on to medicine. Similarly, Zack, though he had at least entertained the prospect of gaining work after school and feared it, reassured his anxious mother that 'yeah, course I'm going to uni', though this decision is rationalised in terms of his 'academic' A levels failing to 'point' to any practical application in a job and finding the prospect of employment 'unappealing'. And of course, as Beck would be quick to point out, all those who went to university were, like the dominant, 'disembedded' from their locale as a corollary, distanced socially and geographically from their early lifeworlds and subject to new experiences and conditionings, breaking the continuity with their classed pasts and sometimes leading to an experienced sense of disjuncture and unease with consociates from that period (see the next chapter for more detail). As Zack put it:

> it's bizarre going back home and talking to people you knew and just seeing how much of a *divide's* in place even though it shouldn't be [...] it's like having done A levels distances you from a lot of the people you knew at school, because at that point a lot of people have diverted and gone for like vocational courses and kind of – well I say vocational, most of them were business studies which doesn't end up being too vocational I think, in practice.

---

[73] Paul was perhaps closest to the immobile dominated in his trajectory and attitudes: having been forced to do A levels by his parents, he balked at the idea of higher education and certainly perceived it as beyond reach, instead taking a job as a clerk for an oil company. From there he gained vocational qualifications, which were seen as 'practical' and possessing real benefits compared to schooling, and worked up the promotional ladder before being made redundant, trying his hand at self-employment and then landing his current job as a software engineer through an agency. His case is discussed below in relation to his employment history.

> But they've gone more that way than A levels say, and you differentiate at that point, people have different things to talk about and start to have different attitudes I think. (emphasis added).

In all cases the protentive sense that university – the key breaking point in their trajectories – was within the realm of the possible, likely and desirable, and the attendant projects conceived and considered in consciousness, would appear to be rooted in two interacting factors: in line with Beck and Giddens, the expanded higher education sector and its consequences for school careers guidance and implicit and explicit familial expectations – there is no doubt that university has become an option suggested to and considered by growing amounts of school pupils who would have struggled to compete for places in its more exclusive days – and the interviewees' perceived ability – they described themselves as 'smart' (Zack), 'hard working' (Tessa) or a combination of the two (Samuel), sometimes explained with reference to IQ and genetic inheritance, and thus saw it as almost self-evident that they would pursue academic studies. However, underlying the latter and contributing to the surrounding expectations and guidance is the real explanatory nub of the upwardly mobiles' divergent trajectories: *parental strategies* – those multifaceted actions stemming from the complexes of dispositions manifest in a desire for offspring to attain symbolic recognition and (as part of that) material well-being which, in Britain and other Western societies, hinges on success within the educational system – engendered, it would seem, not as a universal feature of humanity, as Bourdieu sometimes implies, but by the slightly different positions, trajectories and attitudes of the parents in question compared to the those of the rest of the (immobile) dominated.

These strategies are evidenced by a number of intermeshed actions, behaviours and attitudes that set the parents apart, starting perhaps most fundamentally of all with the fact that they all, unlike the parents of the remainder of the dominated, seemed to place a high value upon educational success and encouraged it amongst their children. Lisa, whose mother had migrated from Ireland to Birmingham to work in a factory and whose father, 'born in a council house', was a draughtsman, provides a typical example when she states that her parents saw education as 'really, really, really important' such that 'doing well at school was the only thing that mattered'. They may not have been able to assist with schoolwork and impart cultural capital themselves, given their own low

holdings, but the message was clear: 'we were told that you had to do well at school or else!' Consequently, she reports that she 'worked hard' at school, and indeed attained entry to the nearby grammar school 'off the back' of her older siblings (the eleven plus system had recently been abolished), and was thus subject to all the expectations and pedagogical modes of capital inculcation such institutions brought. Indeed, it was these expectations and the work ethic of the school, which 'reinforced [her] parents' values and vice-versa', that led her to do A levels and, eventually, follow all her older siblings on to university:

> had I have not gone to the school that I went to I don't think I would've gone to university at all, and I think with the expectation that I did go to university, if that wasn't there either I do honestly think I'd still be working in [supermarket chain where she worked as a teenager], or have about eight kids with god knows how many fathers. And I'm not saying that from a snobby point of view, but I know people who grew up on my road who've ended up in that sort of situation really.

Expanding on this last point, Lisa clearly recognised that her parents' attitudes and behaviours, which so evidently structured her everyday experience, were out of step with those of the parents of consociates in close geographical proximity:

> I think other parents were a lot more laid back really. [They said] 'oh yeah, no it's fine to go to the local comp'. There wasn't that pressure there at all to be different or to do well. I remember from, well ever since I can remember, like from being that big [indicates a short height with hands] that you had to do well at school, because the eldest in my family, the brother, is thirteen years older than me and he was at grammar school at the time. It was always there, always, always, always.

This account is paralleled by those provided by Tessa, Zack and Samuel – all their parents were perceivably encouraging of success at school even if unable to help once beyond a certain level, and all as a result reported working hard, to greater and lesser degrees, at school – but, additionally, as part of their parents' strategies they were *sent to distant schools or colleges with higher expectations and standards* than local alternatives with 'bad reputations' (a common refrain), primarily because of the more affluent areas they served, sometimes accompanied by a residential relocation to 'better quality' or 'reasonably nice' housing, itself a testimony to the parents' strategies for themselves to progress (for analysis of the parents-eye-view of school choice, see Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995).

Precisely why the parents of the upwardly mobile held such different views and conducted such different actions from the rest of the dominated, that is to say, pursued strategies of advancement, is not easy to ascertain given the low numbers of participants, but it is perhaps instructive to note that many of the parents actually occupied relatively high positions within the dominated section of the social space.

Lisa's father, for example, was very much a skilled, less manual breed of worker as a draughtsman; Samuel's father was obviously senior enough within the prison service to afford to move to a 'middle class' area whilst Zack's mother, though unable to work due to disability, was 'very bright indeed' and would have gone on to university had she not have been accused of cheating in an exam. Perhaps this accords well with the discourse of *self betterment* that accompanied many of the interviewees' understandings of their families' actions and wove through their life narratives – their parents populating that region of social space, so close to the petite bourgeoisie to the extent of shading into them and like them generally upwardly mobile into their positions, historically constructed as 'respectable working class', they may display the disposition toward 'getting on', of perpetuating their past social movement into the future by continuing their familial trajectory through whatever means are appropriate, that forms a part of the greater internalisation of bourgeois values long-said to have characterised this class fraction (cf. Bourdieu, 1984: 331ff; Roberts, 2001: 83ff).[74] Thus Lisa, for example, in explaining her parents motives, stated that 'it was the only way to get out of the life that you were in really, to be educated' and, a little later in the interview, that 'the only way to get on was through education really, and through hard work', whilst Samuel notes that his parents

> were always supportive and always really keen that we stayed at school cos they saw it as a means to a better end and the opportunities they hadn't had [...] They valued it and thought it was important cos they saw it as a way for us to better ourselves and that we had opportunities they didn't have.

Furthermore, in at least one case there were clear, if at first hidden, advantages: Zack's grandmother, an office worker of forgotten rank with who he had frequent contact, was not only depicted as 'quite smart' and 'clever with words' and 'always relatively concerned with how I was doing', but because of her disposition toward self-betterment through education (she 'put quite a lot of stock in academic achievement', and this was 'instilled in her by her own mother' as 'how we better ourselves'), two of her children – i.e. Zack's aunts – had attended university and become professionals (a teacher and an accountant) with considerable cultural capital. Having such people within his lifeworld who could not only inculcate

---

[74] This is, then, a long-standing class-based disposition that, instead of primarily encouraging saving and fertility strategies, as for Bourdieu's petite bourgeoisie (which included draughtsmen, like Lisa's father), realises itself through the expanded education system and promotion.

certain forms of cultural capital but provide knowledge of and expectations toward higher education, as Bourdieu and Passeron (1979: 26) noted long ago, distinguished him from the other members of the dominated and no doubt increased his objective chances, and subjective perceptions, of progression through the education system. This did not go unnoticed by Zack himself, who acknowledged that 'they, I think, would probably have been inclined to hurry me towards A levels' and joked that 'they were probably there trying to teach me to read and stuff – "what's this word? Onomatopoeia – now spell that"'.

In sum, them, these individuals have seized upon the burgeoning higher education system and not only considered but pursued trajectories that, in a previous time, would have been closed to them, yet the answer to the question 'why them?' appears to remain, contrary to the ideas of Beck and the others, grounded in the relative advantages they possessed over their social neighbours and the strategies that issued therefrom. Having said this, however, the class origins of the upwardly mobile marked their entire trajectories and set them apart from the socially-static dominant individuals they encountered through their educational careers and occupations as well. Because of their parents' inability to directly transmit cultural capital through focussed or everyday learning, for example, their educational achievements were 'a conquest paid for in effort', as Bourdieu and Passeron (1979: 24) put it, that is, accomplished without the advantages, the ease, the lack of struggle and the assurance (in both senses of the word) which came with parents holding cultural capital (with the partial exception of Zack, who saw himself as intellectually able but mischievous, for the reasons discussed above). Bernadette, for instance, a farmer's daughter who was born, raised and schooled in rural France, received encouragement from her parents but did not consider herself 'bright' at school and, once at university studying languages, 'completely failed' and dropped out, only completing higher education some years later at a post-1992 university in Britain. Her self-accumulated cultural capital, compounded by a penchant for 'partying', which capital-rich students no doubt incorporate but coupled with an ease and confidence in the seminar room and assessed work that allows them to succeed, could only take her so far. Likewise, Tessa describes how, because her parents were unable to help with schoolwork, she had to 'get on with it' by herself – displaying the 'defence' (or disposition) toward quiet determination with minimal 'fuss' noted amongst similarly placed individuals by Walkerdine *et al.*

(1999: 145–6), also evident in her resolve to temper the anguish her wayward brothers brought to her parents. Again, however, her whole trajectory, reliant on the self-accumulation of capital, was characterised by struggle: first of all, her hard-won A level grades were insufficient for direct entry into medicine, necessitating a year out of education – which she spent working and saving rather than travelling (an increasingly valued sign of 'broad horizons' and 'initiative' amongst employers) – before reapplication; following this, she had to undertake a pre-medical foundation course, setting her further behind those riding their inherited cultural capital to a seamless transition; and, when finally at a red-brick university, she had difficulty keeping up with the work, compounded by the economic necessity (itself exacerbated by the fact that, because she had to take a year out, she missed the final year of grants) compelling her to pursue part-time work throughout her degree course in factories, shops and the like, and eventually graduated without honours. All in all, it was, she said, 'hard work', and though she 'couldn't really say for sure' whether it effected her work (despite admitting that 'maybe I could have done a bit better academically if I hadn't been working'), she was nonetheless jealous of those around her who did not have to work, and hence the bearer of deep-seated emotional impulses instilled by class difference, even if this was evidently mitigated by her disposition toward quiet determination and rationalisation:

> Well, I guess [I was] jealous sometimes, 'cos who wouldn't be, I mean I would have preferred to be in a position where I didn't have to work and that I wasn't getting into debt, definitely. I think lots of my close friends actually didn't have to work at all and it was difficult sometimes. But that's just the way it was, and you know, *I got on*. On the plus side of it, I got a lot out of doing jobs and working, I know now that I picked up a lot of skills by working than people who go through university and they – certainly medicine – and they're quite isolated as to what it's like to actually work and work as a part of a team and all the rest of it. (emphasis added)

Further to this, Lisa captures another peculiarity of the upwardly mobile when asked about her parents' encouragement of particular career options:

> Lisa: I suppose it was just whatever you felt you were good at, or could do, but then had I have wanted to do something like drama or something, or art – I was never good at art, but just for example – then that wouldn't have been acceptable because that wouldn't get you a proper job. You know, had to be something that was, could get you a job, you know, that it was something quite sensible really, rather than something outlandish. And I think it was always that – I know it sounds contradictory – you've gotta do something that's good, but not that good. So we wouldn't have been encouraged say, to do something like medicine, because that was out of your league, you know. It was in a sort of set area of acceptable sort of professions or routes that you would take. I know that sounds a bit weird, but yeah.
>
> WA: Was that something that they kind of said or that you could sense?

> Lisa: A bit of both basically, I think it was sort of implied but also through things that were said to my siblings. So for example my, when my brother did [...] my brother did the eleven plus and did really, really well and was sort of earmarked to go to Cambridge, I mean he didn't in the end but it was like 'oh we can't do that, you can't go to Cambridge, that's far too, that's far too high up'. Do you know what I mean? It was sort of, you go to a red-brick or a polytechnic and do something really sort of middle of the road but you can't be exceptional basically. I mean maybe none of us were, but it was never the idea of that you can do whatever you want, whereas I know there's some sort of like liberal upbringings you're taught to sort of be whatever you want and do what you want to do and you're really great at everything kind of thing.

Expressed here, in a nutshell, are the limits of the conceivable range of possibles, the 'sensible', the 'set area of acceptable professions' held by Lisa's parents – illuminating in consciousness, like the beam from a torch, only a circumscribed arc of social space and leaving the rest in the unknown, unthinkable darkness – and conveyed to her explicitly and implicitly, based, in the end, on the limits of capital inhering in their structural location. The disposition toward self-betterment is underpinned by realism and, betraying their class roots, a commitment to the practical or vocational: on the one hand, the resources available and accrued can only go so far in reality (as we have seen) and, as such, set the bounds of perception, protention and projection, whilst on the other, the outcome must be a 'proper job', respectfully but not overly rewarded economically and symbolically, rather than personal fulfilment – i.e. individualization's 'self-realisation' – as is more the case with those distant from necessity. Samuel and Tessa displayed the same sense of realisable goals: remember both had considered a variety of mid-level, vocational courses (with Samuel explicitly vaunting the vocational) such as teaching and occupational therapy; it was only the schools they attended, at their parents' behest, which intervened and set them on a different path in accordance with their institutionalised expectations.

All are now in full time work, two as doctors, one as a HR officer and the rest as 'wired workers'. Most are at the outset of their careers and, moreover, are in occupations that afford relative stability, but those that are not have experienced the insecurities and options said by Beck and others to plague the world of work today. Lisa, after several low-skill, low-pay jobs following graduation and a 'practical' decision to do a PGCE, embarked upon a career in teaching only for disenchantment, and an assault by a pupil, to lead her to change careers and, with research, cogitation and advice from consociates, move into human relations work, retraining in the process. Teaching was not a job for life for her, reflecting Abby's

sentiments above, and she utilised the opportunities for 'reskilling' that mark the educational landscape, but of course by this time she, like the dominant, had acquired enough capital – cultural, economic and social (not only through the capital of her partner, a web developer, but through contacts securing her first HR work) – to facilitate what was essentially a short-distance horizontal, and hence hardly erratic, shift in social space.

Similarly, Paul, the son of a builder and secretary who detested school and is, thus, the only upwardly mobile interviewee not to have attended university, attained work-based qualifications and promotions to secure managerial work, only to be made redundant in the face of a 'down-scaling'. Unlike Lisa, however, he did not have the same capital stocks to draw on and instead fell back on self-employed painting and decorating, the manual, *practical* work he had first experienced with his grandfather, a builder and property renovator, only to then take up his present work through an employment agency. He himself was adamant that that idea of having a 'job for life' 'doesn't exist anymore', that 'people get fed up, people need a change, people grow out of what they're doing I guess' – certainly, he does not 'really want to do the same thing all the time', and, echoing the sentiments of others already witnessed above and sitting comfortably within Beck's theory, used his redundancy as an opportunity to 'think about what I wanted to do'. Still, as with the others, the pull of his class past upon his current position is significant – he intends only to stay in his present work for a few more years before eventually moving into property development, a lucrative application of his renovation skills – even if he will need the economic capital he is accumulating now, as a well-paid software developer with a well-paid human relations manageress for a wife and no children, to achieve this. The present and the future remain anchored in the past, even where, on the surface, there has been a break from it.

Conclusion: Persistence through Change

Perhaps the upwardly mobile demonstrate most starkly of all the theme running throughout the interviews as a whole: the persistence of relational class processes, but in modified form as the conditions in which they operate shift with the perpetual march of social change. The education system has, as Beck and Giddens in particular claim, expanded and engulfed adolescents from tracts of

social space where previously university was as distant in subjective aspirations as it was in objective probability, but on the other hand, amongst those studied here at least, still recruits only those already geared toward social ascendance and oriented toward the arduous labour and struggle of capital accumulation necessary to counteract the inertial drag of social origins. There is even some evidence of an institutionally-induced and aided cogitation of post-school options (or 'reflexivity') amongst all sections, a task of mundane consciousness that was perhaps less prevalent when 'traditional' manual work was plentiful and schools less inclined to intervene in occupational choice, but this occurs only within the confines of a perceived field of possibles and dispositions (including likes and dislikes) produced by the structural mediation of biography. The world of work for many of these interviewees, finally, has been afflicted by insecurity and transience whilst also incorporating extensive global travel, yet the prospects of international mobility, the handling of transience and the plans constructed out of any 'fateful moment' are always shaped by the capital stocks, the dispositions and the future orientations granted by the past.

So individualization is not a complete fallacy, for elements of Beck and the others' arguments do indeed find some support. Yet the claims that class has been or is being washed away by the tide of change, like a fragile sandcastle at the edge of the sea, are revealed for the erroneous exaggerations they are. The examination of objective life courses would instead seem to confirm, but add substantial and much-needed flesh to, the well-founded suspicions of class researchers that we are witnessing not the vanishing of class, but its transformation (e.g. Walkerdine *et al.*, 1999; Savage, 2000). More specifically, I would add, we are witnessing an alteration of the *substance* of class – discrete practices, occupations and educational experiences attached to any particular position – but the system of *relations* and *clusters* in social space that, in the end, define class and underpin practices and experiences, remains largely unchanged.

7. Class Practices, Class Sense, Class Discourse

The idea that class has ceased to structure objective life courses was always the more controversial and contentious component of the individualization thesis. Much more credible, so commentators admit, are the claims that class collectivism, lifestyles, explicit identities and politics have waned to the point of extinction and been supplanted by atomisation, personal responsibilisation, subcultural or other affiliations and post-materialist politics. Indeed, few wholeheartedly contend that class collectivism and mobilisation are as prominent now as ever, save a few staunch Marxists (e.g. Callinicos, 1999). There are others, however – and I am referring particularly to those within the cultural strand of class analysis such as Savage (2000) – who, as we saw earlier, take a more reconciliatory line. Class collectivism, they argue, is not so salient, but then this was never as extensive or important to the theorisation of class outside of a Marxist framework as Beck and the others make out anyway. What matters are the multiple modes through which people *distinguish themselves relationally from others* – either concrete individuals or specific constructed 'groups' – within the social space, display a keen sense of difference and similarity in expressing their individuality and convey this in whatever register they have available – all of which, following Bourdieu, would coincide roughly with the objective divisions of capital. 'Class' as such need never be uttered, especially not as a rallying cry for collective solidarity or mobilisation, but if people do articulate their sense of place with the explicit language of class then it is, contrary to Beck and Bauman's assertions, testament to the enduring relevance of this discourse for perceiving difference despite the socio-political changes of the last thirty years believed to have destroyed it.

The findings reported herein largely concur with the general thread of this argument. There was little in the way of collectivism, unionism or solidarity, consumption patterns have shifted and, as Beck and Bauman would expect, personalised understandings of the setbacks and springboards of life were not uncommon, yet, through all this, *symbolic and perceptual differentiation was pervasive*. This can be demonstrated through the examination of three levels of

practice, starting with the unarticulated symbolic differentiation of lifestyle patterns, or class practices, through the fuzzy and confused, but nevertheless endemic, stark and often self-depreciating *sense* of difference and similarity, even amongst self-proclaimed doubters of class sense, to the explicit discourse of 'class', its prompted and unprompted appearances in the interviews and its place within the typification schemes and political propensities of the interviewees.

Class Practices

Classed lifestyle pursuits and practices were at the core of *Distinction*, and so if the claim of the individualization theorists that lifestyles are no longer expressions of class location but subject to reflexive negotiation and choice, with a resulting decline of symbolic similarities in the flux, were found to be true then this would strike at the very heart of contemporary class analysis. The interviews indicate, however, that such a death blow is not forthcoming. Economic and socio-cultural change have had an impact, to be sure: some consumption patterns once linkable to divisions of capital, such as ownership of televisions or mobile phones, have become less prominent as technological advances have cheapened these products – all of the dominated thus owned such goods, including large wide-screen televisions – old markers of class communities, such as the Working Men's club of Dennis *et al.*'s (1969) coalminers, have dwindled and new pursuits and activities are frequently invented or appropriated from other cultures – to the extent that someone like Hannah, for example, with few economic and cultural means, was prone to feed her children sushi. But beyond this, individualization receives little support. Far from being unconstrained, unpatterned and reflexively adopted, symbolic practices and tastes were, by and large, clearly divided by the dominant/dominated fissure and their uptake fully explicable with the theory of class outlined in chapter 4. This can be illustrated by a snapshot of the musical tastes and leisure pursuits prevailing on either side of the central social partition.

Focussing for the moment on preferences in music, admittedly it initially appears that the heterogeneous and 'popular' tastes mentioned across the board dash any clear appeal to classed practices in the sense described by Bourdieu: rock, grunge, punk, new wave, jazz, dance, electronic, hip hop and downbeat – musical styles with diverse origins and apparently irreducible to the principle of greater or

lesser 'distance from necessity' – all found themselves cited as genres of choice, sometimes jostling alongside each other within one interviewee's cluster of tastes. Amongst the dominant, Isabelle, for instance, declared that she liked 'all sorts really', 'a bit of everything' from dance and downbeat (Groove Armada, Massive Attack) to jazz and thus 'wouldn't put [herself] in any particular pigeon hole', whilst Jackie claimed to have thoroughly 'eclectic' preferences. The dominated, too, often claimed to like, in Tina's words, a 'scoop of everything', with various popular styles even being supplemented by an appreciation of classical music. All this would seem to point toward a widespread 'omnivorousness' of musical taste of the kind that has recently been so extensively documented and has framed so many debates in studies of cultural consumption, though without the customary counter that those with fewer cultural and economic resources remain univores and hence symbolically differentiated and denigrated. Could it be that the proliferation of cultural forms brought by individualising conditions of existence – a globalised and heterogeneous music industry, cultural coexistence and hybridity, affluence and such like – have broken down even this last barrier of class difference and, as Giddens and the others postulate, demanded reflexivity from all?

Though the interviews do not allow assertions on national patterns of consumption, when we begin to sift through and break down the interviewees' answers in a little more detail, a rather different scenario, throwing into question not only individualization but the usually class-friendly thesis of omnivorousness as well, transpires: the tastes of the dominant and dominated remain, on the whole, very similar to those described by Bourdieu. Yes, classical music was cited amongst the dominated, but only, to be precise, by two individuals. For the majority, a 'scoop of everything' actually meant a variety of sub-genres of popular music, whether R'n'B, indie or pop, with classical music representing a *terra incognita*, conspicuous by its absence or, when explicitly raised, quickly rejected:

> Tina: I like some R'n'B, but not all of it. But I like sort of erm, I dunno, like Fratellis and Keiser Chiefs, that kind of thing. Indie I think it's classed as, I don't know. But I do like a general scoop of anything – I mean I like Take That, I'm sad.
>
> WA: What about classical?
>
> Tina: No, don't like that too much.

Even amongst those who do mention classical music, it is clear that the surface 'omnivorousness' is spurious:

> Trisha: Yeah, I've got some classical. Rimsky-Korsakov, Flight of the Bumble Bee, that kind of type of thing, that's really invigorating. Vanessa Mae, I think she's fantastic, has a very much upbeat, modern style classical. *I find opera very difficult.* Couple of bits and pieces. I like musicals as well sometimes, some of the very Andrew Lloyd Webber's type thing. (emphasis added)

Flight of the Bumblebee – an upbeat composition so pervasive in popular culture (television shows, cartoons, etc.) as to diminish its symbolic value – and Vanessa Mae – a well-known violinist who often synthesises popularised classical pieces with dance music – coupled with the acknowledgement of the *limits* of one's ability to consume consecrated art forms demark not the tastes of an early oblate with the ingrained appreciation for the demanding qualities of classical music but, at best, the consumption of *accessible* legitimate culture that Bourdieu held to be a hallmark of the petite bourgeoisie (which Trisha, as a skilled technician, approaches in social space).

This spurious omnivorousness 'from below' can be compared with the tastes of dominant which, though often including reference to popular styles of music, represent a spurious omnivorousness 'from above'. In opposition to the dominated, for example, the vast majority of privileged interviewees, including those in their younger years, actually reported a *strong taste for classical music and opera* – the symbolic markers of cultural capital *par excellence* – with Mozart and Beethoven appearing as favoured composers but with less well-known (and thus symbolically more prominent) figures such as Brahms, Chopin and Mahler also being named. In most cases, furthermore, this was linked to a proficiency, completely absent amongst the dominated, in *playing* classical music on 'noble' instruments, whether piano (Rebecca, Elizabeth), cello (Elizabeth), percussion (Karen) or viola (Jackie), usually started in early life with the encouragement or even exhortation of parents eager to invest capital and strengthened through frequent contact with the paraphernalia of music (cf. Bourdieu, 1984: 75). An obvious case of this is Rebecca, whose mother was a music teacher and encouraged her and her two siblings to all play an instrument and sing, with music, instruments and practice thus being a routine feature of everyday life, but just as interesting are those accounts peppered with more indirect indications. Jackie's comments, for example, encapsulate in a particularly lucid way the experiences of the others. Intent on ascribing her musicality to her own unconditioned propensities, she nevertheless alluded to very particular conditions of possibility:

WA: So where did the interest in music come from?

Jackie: Mostly from me actually. It wasn't – I mean my father's tone deaf, if you've ever heard him sing somewhere it's really quite extraordinary. My mother *does have musical ability*, she sings in a WI choir now where they live, and *she did learn the piano for a bit.* But it was me, we used to go to *friends houses who had pianos* and I used to beg them to please to be allowed to play the piano and to try and pick out tunes, not just like thump it. And eventually, I think *my parents wanted to have a piano anyway, so we got a piano*, which was very exciting. And after about two years *my piano teacher* said you know, would I like to learn another instrument because they had lots of like Saturday music schools – I don't know if they have them round here or where you grew up – where you go on a Saturday morning and you have various sort of instrumental lessons in groups. And I chose the viola, I wanted to play the cello but the cello was rather big and my mother thought well my dad worked Saturday mornings and she was like you had to take it on the bus because, so could you get something a bit smaller. *So we negotiated and negotiated to the viola* which is like the middle instrument of the string group set. So that's what I learnt.

WA: So your parents were quite encouraging?

Jackie: *They were very encouraging, oh yes.* Yes, but not pushy, they never really made me do it. I think *we did have discussions about practice* – I'm sure I remember one or two – but on the whole it was me and I think if I'd turned around and said I don't want to do this anymore, I don't think they'd have made me. I mean you can't, you can try, you can lock a child in a room with an instrument, you can't make them practice with it can you really? So no they were very encouraging of that, and they encouraged me to study [it] at university. (all emphasis added)

A mother who possessed some embodied cultural capital, school consociates with enough capital to own pianos as a facet of lifeworld experience, enough parental economic capital (and the disposition) to acquire a piano and hire a piano teacher, enough of a knowledge and investment to negotiate types of instruments, plentiful encouragement and directives on practice – all this signals that Jackie's musical proclivities were not innate, *ex nihilo* or the product of reflexive deliberation but instigated and nurtured by the propitious lifeworld experiences granted by the control of ample capital.

Furthermore, it is not just that the dominant have a penchant for classical music alongside the plethora of popular genres cited above; rather, when more popular artists or genres *were* mentioned they were often obliquely articulated as *subordinate to*, or at least defined in relation to, classical. Popular music, for instance, was often portrayed as a largely undifferentiated 'other' to its classical counterpart, most succinctly captured in Elizabeth and Rebecca's claim to listen to and play 'both' forms of music when asked – 'classical and pop'. Such a juxtaposition, and such a homogenisation of non-classical music, did not appear amongst the dominated, for whom classical was a negligible genre of less relevance than the various sub-genres of popular music. When particular artists were named from the popular camp, furthermore, they were often older performers with

biographical significance, such as The Ramones or David Bowie, or marginal groups who make frequent references to literary and other highbrow forms of culture and harmonise with the cultured habitus for exactly this reason, such as The Divine Comedy. Contemporary popular music was sometimes little known:

> Jackie: I don't ever listen really to sort of Radio One. We tried for a party once buying a CD of current hits, and we didn't know any of them, it was really embarrassing! I was sitting there sort of picking through some next tracks and I think there was one that we knew, haven't got a clue what it was.

This was less the case, admittedly, for the younger members of the dominant such as Isabelle, Abby and Karen, who engaged significantly with popular forms of music alongside classical and hence displayed a more genuinely omnivorous disposition.[75] Whether this denotes a nascent change in the listening patterns of the dominant toward omnivorousness, as many would argue, or simply a life cycle effect, is impossible to tell, but Rebecca, who at thirty is making the transition out of young adulthood, is certainly suggestive of the latter:

> WA: What about music? What kind of music do you listen to?
>
> Rebecca: Oh gosh, it really depends. I love – if I'm just cooking dinner or something I like to put jazz on, and I like classical music. But if I'm in the car, I'll often listen to Radio One, I'll swap between Radio One and Radio Four, which sounds really hard but [laughter]. *So I don't like a lot of like new pop bands or anything*. I'm not someone who always has to have music on at all – I don't jog to music, I don't rely on it I think, as a lot of other people do.
>
> WA: Have you been more into music at other points of your life?
>
> Rebecca: Yeah, when I was in high school definitely. I was really in to music.
>
> WA: What kind?
>
> Rebecca: ACDC, Aerosmith, Guns 'n' Roses, the Stones, CSNY, Pink Floyd - I loved Pink Floyd in high school.
>
> WA: Do you still listen to that?
>
> Rebecca: Do I still listen to it?
>
> WA: Yeah.
>
> Rebecca: *Well not really*. (all emphasis added)

Unsurprisingly, the upwardly mobile amongst the dominant also displayed a mix of musical tastes. Classical was certainly not absent, and was often rooted in their parents' investment strategies for their upward mobility, as documented in the

---

[75] For a statistical demonstration and interpretation of this finding, see Gayo-Cal *et al.* (2005).

previous chapter – for example, Tessa was encouraged to play classical music on the piano and cornet and was dutifully supported by her parents:

> WA: Did your parents pay for the lessons and the piano?
>
> Tessa: Yeah, my mum used to pay for them, and I think to be honest I think she paid for lots of the stuff through her disability allowance, 'cos she used to get lots of sort of disability living allowance and things like that. So I think, from what I can remember, my mum used to pay for lots of things. And I used to have a piano teacher that I went to, also taught me the clarinet and because like we'd known her for such a long time, they were friends, I don't think they paid huge amounts for lessons. We probably paid a lot less than you would now, so I think that was probably a bit easier because of that. […]
>
> WA: So were your parents encouraging of your music?
>
> Tessa: My mum was, yeah, my mum was. My dad used to work lots, loads of hours, and was far less sort of involved in that. But my mum was, yeah. I mean she used to sort of drive me to rehearsals and you know, all over the place. Yeah she was really good, very encouraging.

Similarly, though he did not play an instrument, Zack's grandmother – the same one who featured so prominently in his ascent – would ply him with classical music CDs. However, where classical was mentioned it was always with some ambivalence. Lisa, for example, stated that 'as a rule I don't listen to classical music' because she finds it 'quite boring' but may, like the petite bourgeoisie in *Distinction* equipped with cultural goodwill, 'hear the odd tune, I couldn't tell you what it was but [I'd say] ''oh that's nice'', whilst Tessa – who also played her cornet in a miners' brass band, the archetypal musical manifestation of the British industrial proletariat – declares that

> I listen to classical music occasionally but not really. I used to listen to it a bit when I was revising 'cos I used to find it quite good as sort of background music. But not really. I mean I used to listen to it more when I used to play classical music, and if I play the piano now that's what I'll play but I would say it's quite rare that I listen to classical music.

Instead the upwardly mobile, including the rest who rejected classical music altogether, preferred the genres they had brought with them from their youth lived in the lower regions of social space, such as house or electronic music (Lisa, Zack), eighties pop (Samuel) or punk (Paul), testifying to the significance of the classed past, even if made more ambiguous by the intersection of trajectory and present position, on consumption tastes.

Beyond the realm of music, broader lifestyle practices also tend to conform to symbolic demarcations of class: tennis, reading 'classics', competitive rowing, walking, badminton, golf, theatre, drama, museums, foreign cinema, interest in art and creative writing – all practices associated with the upper regions of social space

in *Distinction* or (especially something like rowing) historically in British culture – were prevalent amongst the dominant, whilst the dominated, who listed fewer pastimes in general on account of not having 'much spare time' and certainly not 'the time or the money for anything expensive' (Dave), named such activities as boxercise (Phil), 'tinkering' with motorbikes (Dave) and 'making things' (Tina) – all activities centred more or less on practical, *functional* endeavours entailing bodily craft and skill – as their hobbies.[76] Crucially, the activities do not appear to be the outcome of antecedentless, reflexive decisions, as Giddens would have it, but – just as with the playing of musical instruments detailed above – usually stem from particular capital-mediated childhood experiences, classed dispositions or parental input. For example, Dave's penchant for 'tinkering' with motorbikes – which he admits has waned now he is older – is contextualised by the early lifeworld experiences granted by a father who had worked as a mechanic and whose work spilled over into his spare time:

> Dave: My dad was very much like you know, he was very keen on vehicles and stuff like that in general and *we kind of grew up you know tinkering around with cars* and what have you and I suppose its where it comes from really, no doubt about it.
>
> WA: So what kinds of things was he into with his cars?
>
> Dave: He'd just, you know, take the engines apart, repair them, you know whatever, always mucking about with them in one way or another you know. Yeah, and you know when I used to have motorbikes I used to do that as well, used to take 'em apart and mend 'em you know, put 'em back together again. (emphasis added)

Similarly, though on the other side of the social divide, Rebecca's voracious reading – from classics such as *Anna Karenina* to modern fiction – must be contextualised by the fact that her father 'reads a lot' to the extent that he has 'got a library in his house'. Other examples are less directly tied to such lifeworld experiences, but nevertheless issue from the broad classed dispositions established early in life. For example, Phil's attendance at boxercise classes – populated

---

[76] There were some practices shared by the dominant and dominated – for example, both Rebecca and Tina practiced gymnastics in their childhood and both Rebecca and Joe enjoy running. Whether these particular practices are shared more generally would require statistical analysis of a larger sample, but of course not all pastimes are going to be clearly differentiated along class lines in terms of sheer prevalence. However, it could still be that the *meaning* attributed to and the *possible outcomes* of the practices are differentiated. Running, for example, may have very different meanings for Rebecca and Joe – for Rebecca, a means of keeping fit in line with the ascetic health ethic of some of those with ample capital (see Savage *et al.*, 1992), where the body is an end in itself; for Joe a cultivation of prowess using the body in an instrumental fashion (cf. Bourdieu, 1993a: 129ff) – and it is not hard to imagine the contrasting possibilities and outcomes of Rebecca and Tina's gymnastics granted by their differing capital resources. The same could be said for other supposedly shared practices, such as watching football or going to public houses (Savage and Warde, 2008), and raises interesting questions for the mapping of symbolic space.

overwhelmingly, he says, by manual workers and first brought to his attention by a colleague at work – is a product of his disposition toward bodily performance and sport developed as a child with little interest in academic activities at school.

All in all, the image constructed by Beck, Giddens and Bauman of transient and unconstrained lifestyle practices bears little resemblance to the interviewees' accounts. On the contrary, the leisure pursuits surveyed here – including those, such as boxercise, of recent invention – remain tightly structured around the objective divisions of social space and guided by the structurally-situated habitus. Consequently, we can draw this section to a close by observing that even where lifestyles have, as Giddens in particular claims, moved centre stage in some people's decision-making processes, the fact remains that these are still decisions flowing from classed lifestyles and, thus, class positions. Hence we have Jackie and Elizabeth – actually the only two respondents resembling the Giddensian late-modern agent in this regard, likely because their privileges afford such prominence – whose residences and significant others were chosen on the basis of their respective proclivities for two foremost signposts of symbolic dominance: orchestral music and rowing.

Class Sense

Lifestyle practices may be objectively patterned in accord with the fissures of capital, but are they *perceived* as such? Does the homology between social space and symbolic space, in other words, give rise to a widespread and pernicious 'class sense' as symbolic goods and practices are read, decoded and judged by socially induced schemes of perception or has it, as Beck and the others would claim, been drowned by a deluge of individualist discourse? The solution offered by the interviewees' accounts is somewhat unfavourable to the individualization thesis: the sense of relational difference and similarity induced by the reading of practices and behaviours was pervasive in life narratives and provoked a plethora of moral judgements and emotional responses, and even where there were some doubters of class sense such disavowals still surreptitiously summoned perceived differences in order to question them.

Relational differentiation and the perceived homologies upon which it rests were signalled most frequently in the pejorative description of typified incumbents

of positions encountered in the course of life. An exemplary instance is Lisa's recollection of her university days:

> Lisa: [...] for a polytechnic, there were an awful lot of really posh sort of, public school people who you know, I'm not saying just cos you went to public school you're necessarily posh, but that sort of – there were quite a lot of Sloanes, you know, who are really like [imitates voice] 'oh yah, marvellous darling', you know and driving around in sort of posh cars, and at the time had car phones and all this.
>
> WA: What's a Sloane?
>
> Lisa: Oh right, erm okay. It's someone who's – I'm trying to think of an equivalent – so I guess Prince William and Harry would be typical Sloanes. I mean I know they're royalty but they're very sort of, very upper crust, not just necessarily wealthy or public school education but very you know, into sort of horses and polo and – trying to think what else. You know that – does that make sense? Maybe they don't exist anymore, I don't know. But at the time it was a definite term, Sloane rangers, that kind of thing, and they would really sort of look down on anyone who wasn't posh – a very social set I guess.
>
> WA: Did you have much contact with them?
>
> Lisa: No, not at all. I think I was quite antagonistic towards them really.
>
> WA: Were they the majority or the minority?
>
> Lisa: In reality at [the poly] they were probably the minority I guess, but they felt like the majority cos they tended to be quite loud and go round in big groups and make their presence known I guess.

In an almost parallel fashion, Zack makes reference to the prevalence of 'rahs' when describing the affluent area of Bristol in which he used to dwell:

> WA: What do you mean by 'rah'?
>
> Zack: Oh right, just erm, yeah it's Sloanes you know? Basically yeah, posh kids, rich kids, anyone who's got that intrinsic arrogance, I think is probably the sort of general description. You can usually spot them, which is quite funny.
>
> WA: How?
>
> Zack: There's a tendency for rugby shirts amongst men, that'll be pink. There'll be pashminas and things you know. Basically mini Paris Hiltons is what you can imagine for the girls, you know. It's a horrendous stereotype, but in a lot of ways it's true. My first year in halls I lived in one of the more expensive halls, so it did actually attract quite a lot of – well me and one other person were the only people on our floor to have not gone to private schools, you know, and kind of over time you built up a mental image that's quite difficult to explain, but it almost functions on the street where you go like [indicates pointing someone out in the street] 'there's one'. Yeah, I dunno how justified it is, but there you go. It's like racial profiling, but not.

Both accounts demonstrate the prepredicative, 'difficult to explain' pairing of affluence and private schooling (i.e. a certain neighbourhood of social space) with specific symbolic practices (polo, rugby shirts) constructed from experience, both appeal to celebrity figures as model representatives of the classification in order to facilitate communication of the typification bundle (or 'mental image'), both

mobilise extant linguistic descriptors produced and disseminated as part of the historico-symbolic struggle as epithets for the constructed category (rah, Sloane, posh), and in both cases the construction prompts an affective-moral response insofar as they patently recall with resentment the perceived arrogance, brashness and condescension – in other words, the brazen practice of symbolic violence – trussed to the typified individuals. Both narratives are no doubt so pellucid and elaborate because they are delivered from the mouths of upwardly mobile interviewees and refer to the disjunctive, 'disembedding' experience granted by the entering of worlds – the university, the affluent suburb – populated with agents from sectors of social space distant from their origins, yet, when pushed, *just about all respondents* reported making 'snap judgements' (Samuel) or 'instant perceptions' (Claire) based on appearance and articulation:[77]

> Andy: [...] to see a student in Clifton [an affluent area of Bristol] who's eighteen and then see a girl in Whitchurch [a poor area in Bristol] who's eighteen and see the complete difference between the two. You know there's a world of difference you know.
>
> WA: What kind of things then...you say you can tell from the way they dress...what kind of things really stick out?
>
> Andy: Well it's just the way you know you can tell what one [inaudible] just by looking at them, just by the size of their gold earrings or the size of their pashmina, you know basically that's – that and their hairstyle, you know have they got all their hair scraped back, have they got a lot of highlights, have they just got blonde hair. You know it's quite easy to tell the difference without anyone opening their mouth what class they're from, even to what sort of job they maybe might be doing, you know. And with blokes it's the same you know it's very much dress, you know you can tell, instantly tell what class someone's vaguely, roughly from by the way they dress sort of thing.
>
> Isabelle: I think a lot of it's [class] in the way people dress and the way people talk. Erm, I think a lot of store is put by voice and accent and stuff, which is maybe getting less so now but I don't know, there's always like the posh kids in school, and I think there's almost as much stigma attached to that as there is to being the other end of the stick. So yeah I suppose that's it mostly. Perhaps again where you live, people are gonna make a judgement about that, but yeah.
>
> WA: You say the way people dress, what kind of things?
>
> Isabelle: Yeah, erm, there are always seen to be kind of fashions which are seen in certain groups of people. I don't know, like the classic Bristol shellsuit, lots of gold, and baseball cap or whatever – you know you would never expect to see that on somebody who's sort of high class. [...] And if they're well-spoken you're gonna think you know, they're upper class or whatever. Having designer labels and stuff with [inaudible], depends what labels you choose and whether they're genuine I guess. But yeah I think, I think everybody does

---

[77] In most cases this was unprompted, but sometimes it flowed forth when querying the interviewees directly about class, as they were asked whether they thought it had anything to do with clothes, speech etc. and whether they thought they could perceive class on sight or sound. Where explicit class labels are used this has to be borne in mind.

judge from these sort of basics, it's not necessarily a good thing, but I don't think it's gonna change.

Abby: I don't know, I look at the kids I teach and there's a certain – you look at Vicky Pollard on Little Britain, I think that that idea hasn't come from nowhere, it's the kind of tracksuits with the stripes down here [on the arms], and the Argos jewellery, the big medallion style rings and ultra-necklaces and kind of piercings with gold jewellery. I suppose that is what you would look at, you'd be walking through Broadmead [the central shopping area of Bristol] and think – you wouldn't think that person was middle class would you I suppose, honestly speaking?

WA: Do you think you can tell someone's class from looking at them or talking to them?

Tina: Mmhm. Usually by their clothes, and if they've got great big Paris Hilton sunglasses on. Those things are so cheap. Most of 'em you can tell are all dressed prim and proper, average people just tend to dress average.

WA: What do you mean by prim and proper?

Tina: Well prim and proper, you've usually got the little skirts and there little things there and their little shoes and everything's all perfect and pretty. And you're like average like me, you've got a pair of jeans on, pair of boots and a t-shirt. [...] I don't actually like it 'cos to me it's a completely different sort of image. It's like I don't know, too fancy-pancy. I get too dirty to sort of dress like that. Most expensive thing I've ever bought is my coat, and that's fifty quid. God it was expensive! Burnt a hole in my pocket that did.

Whether dominant or dominated, whether picking out signature tastes or linguistic dispositions as markers of the typical habitus attached to certain sections of social space, whether distinguishing oneself from those perceived to be above (the 'fancy pancy' or 'posh kids') or below (the wearers of tracksuits and gold jewellery), and whether addressing greater or lesser distances in social space (in some cases representing the small, 'last difference' that, as Bourdieu [1990: 137] pointed out, can make all the difference in establishing self-worth) – all these examples, crammed with salient themes and by no means exhaustive, demonstrate in stark fashion the persistence and pervasiveness of relational differentiation based on the homology of social and symbolic space and cast doubt over the claim of individualization that class lifestyles and habitualisations, and the self-identification or self-understanding that they produce, have vanished.

Class sense is not always clear-cut, readily embraced or induced by the perception of apparel, but even where fuzziness and doubt surface symbolic differences still inform schemes of vision. Some interviewees, for example, highlighted the obfuscatory role of strategies of self presentation or 'semantic jamming', as Bourdieu (1987: 11) called it, but furtively implied that such strategies were not only limited deviations from established patterns but founded

on a practical mastery of those patterns. Jackie, for instance, commented that class has nothing to do with clothing or image because 'people project the image they wish to', yet later demonstrated the principle of homophily by distancing herself from those who socialise in public houses (perceived to be below her) and those who are members of the local Lawn Tennis Association and collect classic cars (who are perceived to be above her), in other words, those whose practices are removed in the symbolic space from her own pastimes and interests (see below). Similarly, Joe claims that

> You can change your demeanour and the way you communicate and the way you act to the people you're around. I do it all the time, you change your behaviour to your environment. [...] People can wear what they want can't they? I mean sometimes the way I dress people look at me and go 'you batty boy', cos I look gay. And I'm like 'what?'. I think clothing – you can change your look, you can change your clothes. I've got gear in the wardrobe and I'd dress up and people would think I'm a biker, and I can change my appearance and people think I'm a chav. Clothes are as changeable as the weather.

Supposedly versed in strategies of self presentation – and it could also be the case that his response in the interview, and Jackie's too, is itself a strategy for evading explicit placement in the social space – Joe still names, and thereby sanctifies as extant, 'ready-made' categorisations (e.g. 'chavs') which he and the others he interacts with clearly perceive to be identifiable with certain symbols, including attire, and indeed his *modus operandi* is enabled only by the assumed existence of such a category.

This kind of specious uncertainty was, however, generally uncommon. Vastly more frequent, in contrast, was the coagulation of class sense into a description of oneself and others removed in social space as living in separate 'worlds' or 'realities', though this was also tied to perceived differences of behaviour, attitude and orientation as well as consumption or leisure patterns, and to reveal moments of life characterised by discomfort, disjuncture and crushed self-esteem. Lisa, for example, describes how the lack of money and material possessions *vis-à-vis* more affluent contemporaries when she was young impacted upon her sense of self-worth:

> I suppose you just felt not as good as other people really. Yeah, that you weren't as good as them and that somehow you were a bit different and a bit, as if you were from a slightly different world really I suppose, not quite part of the modern world, if that makes sense.

An even starker picture is drawn by Tina when she discusses working as a member of the maintenance team for an organisation employing capital-rich professionals. After mentioning that she is regularly ignored by the professionals, who she

describes as 'snotty', or subject to their peremptory orders, and that this is the case for the maintenance staff as a whole, she is asked whether a division exists between the maintenance workers and the professionals:

> Tina: Yeah. There's a strict line – we're scum, they're not. That's how it feels anyway. Not all of them are the same, I mean you do get some nice people. They're really sort of genuine, they make you a cup of tea, they sort of move out the way and hold doors. A lot of them they're just sort of, 'you're scum, I'm not looking at you'.
>
> WA: How does that make you feel?
>
> Tina: Shit. You get used to it though. It's kind of funny after a while, you just – 'you're so pathetic'. But they wouldn't be anywhere without us anyway – if they didn't have anyone to keep the rooms that they work in, the buildings up together, decorate them, kept them looking good, then they wouldn't have a job. They forget that bit. Oh well.

A few pithy words express the invidious 'class contempt' (Reay, 1998a) on behalf of the privileged professionals, that is, the (mis)translation of class differences, via socially-produced and situated schemes of interpretation, into perceived differences of *worth* or *value* which prompt behaviours, such as the 'tendency not to see or hear others as people' mentioned by Andrew Sayer (2005: 163), which make their targets feel 'shit' – a terse term that succinctly encompasses a vast montage of negative sentiments and self-evaluations – and, because of their powerlessness, 'get used to it'. Such class contempt is, however, 'felt up as well as down', as Sayer (2005: 163) rightly notes and Karen's narration of her schooling demonstrates:

> Karen: I suppose I didn't always have that many mates and you know, there weren't actually that many kids of professional, liberal parents in my school, if you know, like very, very few really. I think probably the only Guardian readers in a fifteen mile radius [laughter]. It felt like that anyway. So I think it sometimes was a bit of a defence really.
>
> WA: What was it that made you not get on with them?
>
> Karen: I don't know, I suppose we just didn't – I did get on with them I suppose I just didn't fit in really, always. I did have friends at different times, but I think I was quite different really.
>
> WA: So what did the parents do of the kids that you knew?
>
> Karen: Erm, I don't know really. A lot of, you know there weren't many kids of teachers around, there weren't many kids of you know, social workers, lawyers, that sort of thing, doctors. I think they probably went to private schools. And it just, it just felt like I was different, bit different. But at the same time I wasn't miserable all the time, and I did quite enjoy it as well. And I had some really good fun things that I did. But it was just sometimes quite hard work, and I did get bullied a bit sometimes. [...] I think like I said, having Guardian-reader parents probably disadvantaged me a bit at school because everyone else came from quite, most other people came from such a different world, and it was quite hard to understand where they were coming from for me.

Yet whilst such upwards class contempt, produced in this case by the disarticulation between the dispositions generated in the familial domain of the

lifeworld and those of the majority of Karen's school consociates, evidently has serious ramifications for emotional experience and sense of self, it is tempered by the fact that, however scorned by her schoolmates, it was Karen and not them who possessed the capital and dispositions valued by the institutions she passed through and allowing her to succeed in the education system and attain an economically and symbolically rewarded position as a doctor.

Class Discourse

The distances and differences of social space and symbolic space, then, continue to shape subjectivities and pervade relations with others. Class is, *pace* Beck, still experienced and, consequently, on this front individualization has been refuted. Yet some precision is necessary here: *theoretical classes* or classes on paper, the objective clusters in social space which map into symbolic space and shape perception, have been shown to still mediate experience and subjectivity, but the salience of *constructed* classes – the explicit discourse of 'class' as a means of grasping and articulating the differences of the spaces and fabricating social and political collectives which Beck and the others often have in mind when announcing the decline of class – has not been properly demonstrated hitherto. This is, in a sense, not strictly necessary: the core facets of class according to the Bourdieusian scheme have all been confirmed; the fate of class discourse is essentially tangential. Yet if Beck and the others are to be assessed fairly – the absence of constructed classes might lend at least some credibility to their claims – and if we are to attain a grip on any contemporary trans-lifeworld doxa supporting division then this must be assessed. This last section, therefore, will examine the use of class labels as descriptors and typification bundles and – sure gauges of 'class consciousness' in the Marxist tradition, but here an indication of the importance of an established principle of perception – their linkage with life's obstacles and opportunities and political proclivities. The argument is perhaps more favourable to the individualization theorists than has been the case so far, but, as will be shown, only a naïve sociological theory would see in the processes unmasked an absence of class – indeed, the opposite is true.

A simple method of demonstrating the significance of 'class' as a perceptual and linguistic construct is to examine the prevalence of unprompted use of associated terms in the narration of biography:

> Tessa: [...] I wouldn't want to live in Clifton, it's too white, middle class to be honest. I'm a bit of an inverse snob really. [...]
>
> WA: What do you mean by inverse snob?
>
> Tessa: Well I think I just, I guess, I don't know what I mean. I guess I just wouldn't want to live in a middle class white place, cos I guess I'm a bit snobby when it comes to places like that. Yeah, dunno. I think it's people with lots of money, I don't necessarily want to live in that sort of an environment. [...] I don't really have any, wouldn't really say I have any friends from working class families, that I've met in Bristol. I mean it's not like they're really loaded, but you know, none of them are from sort of working class backgrounds. Whereas at school, that was, most of my friends were. [...] [at the university I went to] I think, the numbers, the demographic is quite I'd say, there's a minority of working class students. I mean of course I'm not in a working class profession now, which is a bit strange, but I still do consider myself to be a working class person. I don't know whether that's right or wrong, depends how you classify I suppose. But yeah, I think there's definitely a minority of working class sort of people at [the university].
>
> Andy: I imagine out of, I'd say out of everyone in the fifth year I'd say about forty percent of those people stayed on to sixth form and I'd say out of everyone who fifth year maybe only ten percent were people who eventually went on to university. People just didn't go to university. It would have been the more middle-class kids who went to university and they would tend to be the ones who stayed on in sixth form. [...] now for most kids from a middle-class background you go to university 'end of' you know, there's no sort of college or go and get a job at eighteen everyone goes to university whereas only a minority of middle class kids would have gone to university when I was still at school it was that [...] So I think a lot of you know, not all but quite a lot of [the people living in the area I grew up in] would have been sort of from that, you know form sort of working-class to lower-middle class, as opposed to middle-middle class or upper-middle class – which now is much more middle-middle class to upper-middle, but it was a lot more mixed.
>
> Paul: Erm, well [the area I grew up in is] just like a suburban estate, primary school, '30s built type place. Yeah, kind of working-class area, yeah.
>
> WA: And then you moved to [another area]?
>
> Paul: Yeah.
>
> WA: When was that?
>
> Paul: When I was about ten or eleven. And that's similar, just like a working-class area with professional people and manual workers. All kinds of people.
>
> WA: Is there anything else that you do [outside of work]?
>
> Jackie: Hobbies. Gardening, very middle aged and rather middle class I suppose [...] [politically] I think we need a bit of a change, and all this nannying about – what is it now? Middle-class drinkers, yes, apparently we're middle-class alcoholics. Have you read all this stuff?
>
> WA: No I haven't heard about that.

> Jackie: Oh they've started on – because some people binge drink, they've decided to pick on middle England to say that we all drink too much. Which I'm sure we all do, but I think we're perfectly capable of making that decision ourselves, I'm not sure we need the government.

All these snippets, sometimes taken from more than one place in each interview, demonstrate some of the more and less elaborate ways in which class labels still serve as practical linguistic vehicles for communicating portrayals of distinct types of areas and people characterised by specific symbols and behaviours homologous with the distributions of capital, sometimes including self-understandings and, in Jackie's case, interpellations in the loose sense of recognising oneself ('that means me') in the words and deeds of abstract others, on the assumption that such terms have wider comprehension and purchase and, therefore, utility and relevance in everyday life. Dominant and dominated, young and old, male and female: the deployment of class descriptors, assimilated as ready-made typification bundles and judged functional, show no attachment to any particular demographic – the discourse of class is, historically, a nationwide one – though there was an over-representation amongst the upwardly mobile, like Tessa above, perhaps as they groped for concepts to make sense of their disjunctive experiences.

On the other hand, just under half of the interviewees *did not* use class labels until prompted, even if they clearly displayed a sense of difference and similarity clothed in a different vocabulary (such as, for example, Tina's above-witnessed sense of distance from the professionals at her workplace). This is not necessarily a novel situation – even when 'class' was supposedly more prevalent in national discourse its explicit terms were often absent amongst lay people and replaced by such expressions as 'our betters', 'the lower sort' or 'us and them' (as in Hoggart, 1957). In any case, when pressed,[78] *all* the interviewees readily recognised the discourse of social class and forwarded various perceptual categorisations such as 'working' or 'lower class', 'middle class' and 'upper class', sometimes even going so far as to distinguish finely-graded sub-classes ('upper-middle', etc.):

> Mark: Erm, well you've got your working class, middle class and your upper class, people who can group into those categories. I don't know, is kind of a category you group people in to.

---

[78] The respondents were asked toward the end of the interview the following question: 'when I say social class, what does that mean to you/make you think of?'. A series of follow-up questions were then pursued.

> Gary: Well I'd say upper class, middle class, lower class, you know. I think there's three categories if you look at it from that point of view.
>
> Abby: Working class, middle class, upper class. Upper-middle class I suppose for the in-betweeners. Yeah, that's what it would mean to me.

The precise *content* of these categorisations – that is, what practices, behaviours, symbols and judgements they were paired and typified with and what the interviewees used them to denote – varied significantly, with perceived differences in aspirations, opportunities, occupations, possessions, housing, money, education and 'moral standards' (Yvonne) all being frequently forwarded. But this semantic elasticity does not detract from the fact that, contrary to what Beck would have us believe, the concept of 'class', far from being abandoned wholesale as a defunct classification with the withering of older symbols of class position, is still deployed as a useful tool for capturing the various elements of experience dictated by the homology of the spaces. Even the small minority of interviewees who claimed that, with expanded education, the democratisation of consumption and the proliferation of affluent celebrities from the lower sections of social space (e.g. reality television contestants), the class system had become more 'fluid' and that it was now harder to distinguish classes according to some criteria, continued to identify classes on the basis of other markers. Furthermore, these typification bundles were often tied up with a subtle *distinguishing* agenda in which the symbols or behaviours of a particular 'class' – whether constructed as higher or lower – were valued *vis-à-vis* one's own (as unpleasant, distasteful or immoral). This could be a judgement of actions of the dominated in their quest for economic and symbolic worth and their relation to the body, read through a dominant aesthetic and orientation in which diligence (shorn of its supporting cultural capital), respectability and presentability are valued:

> Nigel: I mean in Ireland there really was an emphasis on education, that this was the way to get ahead, and here it's get on Big Brother. What the hell is going on? Or win the lotto, you know. Why not go to school instead? [...] I mean the tattoos and the earrings and all that sort of stuff, I mean that's a dead give away. Again I just look in horror, women who allow their children to deface their bodies and thereby limit their opportunities in later life. What for?

It could be attached to the geographical correlates of social and symbolic distance (cf. Southerton, 2002), as residential areas are measured against the expectations and standards of a capital-rich habitus focussed on cleanliness and grandeur rather than, for example, community or diversity:

> Jackie: [...] I think class is a bit muddled. But you know, you drive round bits of Bristol and they're like a bit yucky. If you drive round other bits and you think 'gosh this is nice, couldn't possibly afford to live here' so, you know, bits at the top of the hill in [the affluent area in which I live] you know we admire before we walk down the hill to our house. You know but we're not sort of living in Lawrence Hill or something, which I don't think is terribly nice.

In some instances, it could even congeal in to a comparison of *value systems* in which the experienced is valorised and the non-experienced, even if objectively better able to secure the legitimised rewards on offer, is discredited in a bid to resist domination (cf. Sayer, 2005). Tina, for example, criticised 'stuck up snobs' who say 'daddy, daddy, buy me this, daddy, daddy, buy me that', stating that

> *I think the way we grew up, like not having loads, is done well.* I couldn't go, I couldn't say 'buy me this, buy me that', 'cos my mum used to say 'sod off! I can't afford it'. So you have to work for your stuff, you get things for treats, whereas you get some that say 'buy me this, buy me that' like my mate used to live round the corner. She said 'buy me this, buy me that', 'okay then, okay then, okay then', and she's just a spoilt little brat and she used to sulk when she didn't get her own way. I mean her mum took her out of school one day to take her shopping. There you go.
>
> WA: So they don't learn....
>
> Tina: *You don't respect nothing do you? If you've got everything you respect nothing.* (emphasis added)

Likewise, but from a French perspective (showing the transnational parallels of relational class processes), Bernadette, who has traversed an upwards trajectory through the French and latterly British social space from her poor rural origins, relayed the following in relation to her own schooling:

> [...] when you're a kid and you come from, just a poorer, not poor but you know like less wealthy background than people you end up being at school with, it creates the differences of class, I don't know, I say it's kind of you don't have as much money as they have and it creates a difference, differences of behaviour between people who have different, their parents have different things on their mind like you know, you don't spend more than you need to, you're careful and you end up, to me *you end up having a much more real approach to life* rather than having people who are brought up in an environment where they kind of never really have to think about it and they always have nice clothes and can do what they want and can go skiing and whatever, and you never do and you feel inferior by it. But I think growing up in that is, *makes you more, just more ready I think for life in general*, because it's not like suddenly you know you really nested or you kind of brought up really cocooned and suddenly you're dropped in life with nothing else, it's probably quite a hard awakening. I don't know it's maybe my judgement from being on that side of it. So I don't think it's...*it's probably an advantage when you're a kid*, I think it's quite good for you just normal thing. And I suppose it doesn't even, or me doesn't make me pursue wanting money or living for that, you know it just makes me, I appreciate what I've got, just not working for money but working for what you like and, yeah just that really. (emphasis added)

The semantic elasticity of 'class' amongst the interviewees may not be worrisome, given that each typification bundle is bound to vary according to experience whilst still addressing objective homologies, but its perceived lack of

coherence – signalled above by Jackie claiming class to be 'muddled' and Karen claiming it to be 'difficult to define' – and the confusion prompted by elaboration of the notion could, in extreme cases, result in a doubt-inducing questioning of 'class' amongst several of the interviewees:

> Bernadette: But, but yeah it's a very, it's a very weird thing cos I don't even really know how to class people, I don't even know who's middle class, who's one...it's really weird. I don't know [a work colleague] was saying something quite interesting last time saying, like for example a builder who's got a lot of money, who makes as much money as a, like an IT manager, IT director something like that, they seem to have a different class but they don't – you know they have the same amount of money but they're in a different class range and [...] Yeah so that was, so yeah, yeah it's quite an important thing, it's just it's something quite hard to understand well, where the limits are and what it really means. But I think it's something quite important, I think it's to do as well with how you grow up and how you, just which, where you come from really – if you come from somewhere really like popular or more middle class or which school you went to, how you speak, express yourself, and it kind of, it shows...and sometimes, so it's not really to do with money sometimes really to do with where you come from. I don't really know what is it behind all that it's, quite an important thing that how people relate to each other and how they, who they are. I don't think it's to do with money I don't think it's just to do with where you're coming from or, if you come from a very bourgeois thing or not you know you can be, that state of mind I don't know. [...]
>
> WA: So would you put yourself in class?
>
> Bernadette: But, so what is it? How would you classify it? Would you really say there's like a...would you classify it at all and how would you do it?

> Dave: Now I, it depends what you mean by class you know, I don't have a rigorous definition of it myself but I think it's you know to talk about the working class as people do, I don't really know what that means. I don't know if I'm in it, if I've always been in it, if I've ever been out of it or what because it's a grossly over-simplified term to me, it doesn't actually tell me anything about somebody if you say they're working class. [...] I am what I am, I do what I do you know, lot of people would class me as working class because I'm a truck driver, and a lot of people would class me as middle class because I went to a grammar school, it just underlines my point I think – it doesn't tell you anything about anybody.

Others talked of class being a 'woolly thing' (Paul) or a 'cipher' for whatever the user of the term wanted to it to apply to (Zack). Again, however, this is not an indubitable sign of the decline or irrelevance of class discourse to these individuals, some of whom had elsewhere used class appellations as descriptive devices. Instead it is an altogether expectable reminder that 'class' is first and foremost a *practical* classification used to convey in a parsimonious manner aspects of perceived reality in daily life. As Bourdieu put it, echoing Schutz (1962: 93ff) on the incoherence of the practically-oriented stock of knowledge:

> The representations which agents produce to meet the exigencies of their day-to-day existence, and particularly the names of groups and all the vocabulary available to name and think the social, owe their specific, strictly practical, logic to the fact that they are often polemical and invariably oriented by practical considerations. It follows that practical classifications are never totally coherent or logical in the sense of logic; they necessarily

> involve a degree of loose-fitting, in owing to the fact that they must remain 'practical' or convenient. Because an operation of classification depends on the practical function it fulfils, it can be based on different criteria, depending on the situation, and it can yield highly variable taxonomies. (Bourdieu, 1987: 10)

The uncertainty and misgiving thus stems more from the interview situation, in which the participants were, at this stage, forced to become quasi-sociologists, where the incoherence of practical classification is translated into a stated incoherence of the concept *per se*. Almost scholastic reflection on mundane reality is not, as Phil demonstrates, a familiar or effortless task:

> Phil: But it's [class] quite difficult to define – I'm quite blunt as I said, so that is quite bluntly how I'd describe it, but I'm sure there's way, way more in-depth stuff than I could ever envisage to understand. There are things I know quite well, like my trade, there are things I don't very well at all, and that is social class. I wouldn't really have an understanding for it. I think it's one of those things that if you don't study it, like I don't, you see it but because you've seen it all your life you just accept it without really understanding it.

So, contrary to what might have seemed the more plausible claims of the proponents of individualization the discourse of social classes remains a prominent scheme of typifications through which not only the social world but one's place within it, i.e. one's social identity, is thought and described. All very well, but what of the real nub of individualization, namely the extent to which the interviewees relate 'class' *directly to their own lives and the injustices and privileges they have experienced*? They may recognise class as a social phenomenon, but do they acknowledge it as a barrier or boost for themselves and perhaps even a politically significant issue, as Devine's (1992) affluent workers did, or do they instead, as Beck and Bauman assert is ever more the case, shift the burden of responsibility for structurally allotted trajectories on to their own, individual shoulders? Starting first of all with the foremost advantages and disadvantages the interviewees themselves felt they had possessed in the course of their biography, are structural features dissolved into individual motivations, attributes, shortcomings, personalities and will or grasped as socially or 'externally' imposed and linked to collective conditions of existence? In fact, alongside slogans of individualization to the effect that 'you pave your own way in life' (Gary) and 'make your own opportunities' (Hannah), purely individualised traits were commonly offered amongst both the dominant and dominated, with lack of motivation (Dave), lack of attention (Rebecca), shyness (Bernadette, Elizabeth) and even height (Tina) being cited as setbacks whilst stubbornness and independence (Joe). sociability (Oliver, Tina),

adaptability (Rebecca) and hard work (Paul) were forwarded as chief driving forces, even if in reality the trajectories in question were, as shown in the last chapter, channelled by capital possession. Yet far more frequent, including amongst these same interviewees, were appeals to the two sources of class power in contemporary society: economic capital (or simply 'money') and cultural capital (in the guise of 'education'). Regarding economic capital, the dominant recognised that it had been a key resource and 'fall back' throughout their lives, allowing them to pursue practices that would otherwise have been off bounds, such as Mark's university studies and post-graduation voluntary work or Nigel's employment-free university life, whereas the dominated, as well as the upwardly mobile, noted the pernicious effect of relative penury in preventing them from following ambitions, achieving their potential or leading a fulfilling existence, whether that be a case of prohibitive course fees indefinitely deferring a projected reskilling (Joe), proximity to necessity compelling time and energy-sapping employment at university (Tessa), a lack of means scotching a past-time of racing cars (Trisha) or whatever. As to cultural capital, many of the dominant openly chalked much of their success down to the education they received – its content but also ethos, discipline and expectations – from their various schooling institutions, i.e. *an 'external' factor*, rather than their own individualised ability, which only Zack, who persevered through a comprehensive school low in the field of education, professed in the form of his 'brightness':

> Elizabeth: [...] my schooling put me at an advantage, cos as I say you don't have any choice about working when you're at private school, so you get more likely to achieve grades in exams [...].
>
> Isabelle: Erm, I suppose what I feel I ought to say, although I don't know, is that I think my parents sacrificed an awful lot to put me and my brothers eventually through private school. They – I don't know about my younger brother, but us other two were definitely on scholarships, so you know it wasn't such a sacrifice as it might have been, but they definitely, you know we didn't have family holidays or didn't have new stuff all the time, we lived in a little house and everything. And at the time we would probably as children have said we'd rather have all the stuff and not the schooling, but they really thought that was the best thing they could do for us at the time and for the long term, and that was their decision to use their money in that way. So I'm pretty sure you know, we wouldn't have all ended up with perhaps the big qualifications and stuff that we've got it if hadn't been for that.
>
> Jackie: I think I had an advantage at eleven when I went to the grammar school. I think that was a very big advantage, very big. It just gave me access to all these opportunities, a world of opportunities really. And expectations, suddenly expectations were there about what would happen, rather than question marks.

Amongst the dominated, however, there is more variation, ambivalence and what might even be described as an *individualization of class*. Trisha and Andy, for example, both noted how their lack of education – or more precisely, lack of educational qualifications – has prevented them for getting jobs they had applied for and felt they had the experience to carry out adequately, which seems more of an 'external' feature, especially as both rationalise their post-education choices in terms of prevalent expectations rather than their own failures, yet both Paul and Tina individualise their class-based constraints: Tina in terms of seeing one of her key disadvantages as being 'thick', Paul in terms of wishing he had 'done better at school', 'had a better attitude' about it and 'knuckled down and taken it a bit more seriously' without realising that his orientation at the time was fuelled by the capital stocks available. This scenario – recognition of social advantage amongst the dominant yet an individualization of structural features amongst the dominated – runs counter to the received wisdom of class theory that the privileged tend to adopt a more individualistic outlook whilst the lower sections of social space remain more collectivist in orientation and socially aware. Yet, rather than being a disposition induced by changed social conditions, *it is in fact perfectly in line with Bourdieu's long-established notion of sociodicy*, in which the view that success is a matter of innate talents or hard work – propagated by the dominant but questioned by some of their more cultural/liberal-left members with an extended symbolic mastery of social affairs, who are over-represented here – is disproportionately internalised as doxic by the dominated:

> When you ask a sample of individuals what are the main factors of achievement at school, the further you go down the social scale the more they believe in natural talent or gifts – the more they believe that those who are successful are naturally endowed with intellectual capacities. And the more they accept their own exclusion, the more they believe they are stupid, the more they say 'Yes, I was no good at English, I was no good at French, I was no good at mathematics.' Now that is a fact – in my view it is an appalling fact – one that intellectuals don't like to accept, but which they must accept. It doesn't mean that the dominated individuals tolerate everything; but they assent to much more than we believe and much more than they know. (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992: 114)

The words of the dominated are, therefore, less a new phenomenon than in full accord with the realities of class first exposed in the sixties and seventies when education was beginning to expand in European states (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, 1979; Bourdieu, 1996). In fact, not even the aforementioned individualist slogans and traits, which could otherwise still be considered proof of individualization at work, even if in a rather diminished way, are necessarily

products of recent social conditions alone: the doctrine of personal autonomy (and its underside, self-blame), as an integral part of individualist philosophies, has circulated in and out of general doxic intuition (in the West at least) for centuries with the development and propagation of philosophical and political *Weltanschauungen* and forms merely one component of the practical mastery of self-understanding that nestles incoherently – such is the nature of practical mastery – alongside recognition of social setbacks to greater or lesser degrees depending on historical and structural context (see Lukes, 2006). If anything, the individualism promoted by contemporary neo-liberalism will only have reinforced existing tendencies of self-perception.

Still, even if the dominant did tend to recognise their class-based social advantages, at this stage the explicit idiom of class remained absent. So what if 'class' is brought overtly in to the frame and suggested as a possible source of constraint or enablement? Do the interviewees deny or embrace it, or tie it to politics in any way? The answer might, at first, offer Beck and the others some consolation insofar as a significant contingent (about a quarter) of the interviewees – old and young, dominant and dominated – *denied class had played any role in their own lives*. To give just a few examples:

> Claire: I don't think it's really been anything to do with me.
>
> Dave: No, it never played a big part in my life, never played any part in my life really [...].
>
> WA: Do you think it's [class] ever played a role in your life?
>
> Mark: Not that I can think of. I don't think so.

This is despite some of the same individuals mobilising class labels at earlier points of the interview and recognising the benefits or blockades provided by their economic and cultural capital. Now erasing the consolation for individualization theory, however, it can only be surmised that this is less likely a simple by-product of transforming social circumstances and a concomitant slipping of 'class' from stocks of knowledge so much as a broken link between the discourse of class and perceived advantages or disadvantages largely because, as Claire's elaboration exemplifies, these individuals construct class as *purely a classification system* – and a confused and invidious one at that – rather than a discrete set of fiscal, educational or other constraints and enablements:

Claire: I suppose it is still an issue in that people still put themselves in classes and it's kinda, it seems to have been used as a derogatory way really, in both ways. I mean people say 'oh they're working class' or 'they're middle class' it's, I don't think it's very helpful, I don't think it's a helpful system but it still exists.

WA: Right okay, do you think it's ever played a role in your life at all?

Claire: Erm, I don't think so, no. I suppose I've had the odd, some people think that I'm a bit posh because I went to a private school, but then when – well I don't know that's people I know they think that initially and then think 'no, she's not'! [laughter]. But I don't know what people who don't really know me think, I don't know if it's an issue for them, I mean it's never been an issue for me, you know wherever people put themselves in the class hierarchy, but it might be for other people.

That it is not the product of a decline of class discourse is further bolstered by the fact that just about everyone identified themselves with a class (either middle or working), even if hesitantly and ambivalently, on the criteria already established when elaborating what the perceptual-linguistic categorisations of 'class' denoted to them,[79] and, more importantly, that *far more of the interviewees did recognise class as playing some kind of role in their lives*. This took two forms, neither of which, incidentally, evoked any real notion of 'collectivism' or 'solidarity' in the sense of an empathy with the sufferings of socially proximate others and articulation of collective goals and interests. On the one hand, several of the interviewees interpreted the (dis)advantages of capital recounted above in terms of class or else forwarded new, related ones, showing a close articulation between the construction of class and economic and educational means and the orientations these furnish. Trisha, for instance, saw her exclusion from a job on the basis of credentials and her lack of funds for car racing in class terms, whilst Elizabeth and Jackie anchored their educational advantages, and much more, in their perceived class backgrounds:

> Elizabeth: Other than, because my parents were, my father definitely was very middle class, middle yeah, middle class and my mum was probably – I think her mum was, well must have been middle class if she went to university, cos there's no way she would have done otherwise, but her dad wasn't, and that was an issue, very much an issue then, that they were different. [...] So in the sense that it influenced me in the fact that I expected to do some kind of training, not necessarily university but some kind of training rather than leave school at sixteen. You know I knew I wasn't leaving school at sixteen and I knew that from a very early age, it never, never occurred to me that leaving school at sixteen was an option, even though that I knew theoretically it was, if that makes sense. So in that sense it would have, it did affect me yes, but I wouldn't say I was aware of it, if you know what I mean.

---

[79] Only four refused to identify with a class: Dave, because of the confusion over the concept he had displayed earlier; Oliver, who preferred to be seen as a 'resident of the United Kingdom' and whose broken trajectory must be taken into account here; Frank, who saw himself as 'untypical' and falling outside his constructed criteria of classes on account of having changing economic fortunes through his life; and Tina who, echoing the respondents in Savage's (2000) study, preferred to describe herself as 'average'.

> Jackie: I grew up in a nice neighbourhood, I had a father that worked and a mother that didn't. Went to a nice school, went to a private school for the first part of my life, but I think more out of necessity than particular sort of 'oh yes we must send Jackie to the school'. Erm, had all the aspiration, you know had music lessons, didn't do pony riding, lots of my friends did. Erm, went to a good school with an assumption I'd do O levels, A levels, university. I think that all ties in, sadly, to being screamingly middle class.

On the other hand, a large proportion of the interviewees perceived the effects of class *mainly on the level of interaction*, including difficulties of interpersonal relations, homophily and even discrimination. Oliver, for example, indicated he had difficulty 'dealing with individuals which are deemed to be upper class', whilst Rebecca admitted that it shaped

> my interests and the people that I choose to be friends with – a lot of that has to do with, a lot of my friends have a similar social background as I do, as my husband as well does.

In a similar vein, but from the perspective of someone thrown into existence in the lower regions of social space, Lisa noted that

> […] to an extent, it used to dictate the sort of friends I would have. So when I was younger I wouldn't sort of hang out with what I saw as posh people, you know had a chip on my shoulder basically, whereas now it just doesn't, you know, I don't care, it doesn't bother me at all.

Elaborating on this from the dominant position, Abby states that she 'hasn't really mingled with those, with a broad cross-section of society cos of the kind of school I've gone to and the kind of university I've gone to. That is just simple fact.' She continues on to say that

> I think people have a certain view of my ability to be professional based on my appearance, my accent, my schooling I suppose. So I suppose as I've walked into a job people have had preconceived ideas about me just on how I've walked in, and that – my own school hold me up as being the ultra-professional person ever. I don't think I am, and I think that's based a lot upon simply how I carry myself and how I project myself. I'm not particularly professional at all, I'm no more professional than the next person. I genuinely believe it's because I don't have a particularly strong Bristolian accent and I suppose I do things in quite a methodical way as I've been trained to do through the school I went to, perhaps. I don't think class has particularly affected me other than that. I don't really know.
>
> WA: Do you think it could be seen as an advantage or disadvantage for other people?
>
> Abby: What my class?
>
> WA: No, their class.
>
> Abby: Advantage or disadvantage? I think people get quite cliquey. Certainly if I'm honest with myself, I mean there are certain working men's clubs that I wouldn't want to walk in to. I mean I look at my mum's family who are a kind of – we go back to Cheshire where my grandparents originate from and my mum originates from, when I meet my family, my mum's family, her cousins and things, I almost don't know quite how to have a chat about stuff, cos they've all had kids very young, they do things like they're butchers or they work in a supermarket or things like that. I can honestly say, hand on my heart, and it's not cos they're not nice, they're lovely people, I just don't really know what to have a chat about.

> Don't really know what to say cos they all do different stuff and their lives – I can't really talk about work or reading or some of the stuff I'm doing, or buying a house or doing stuff, boring stuff that I talk about I suppose, cos they're talking about a whole different spectrum of a different reality to me. And so I suppose there is, I almost feel like there's a little club going on based on their reality. They'd probably find the same if they came and sat and had dinner with me and a load of teachers, they'd be sat there thinking there's a little clique going on here. So I suppose there's little groups and I don't know that it's an advantage or a disadvantage, it's just the way it is.

Finally, in answer to whether class has ever played a role in his life, Joe is forthright:

> Yes. Yes, it put a stop to my athletics career because I was coached by a guy who was just a welder, and I wasn't coached by a nationally recognised coach although I was ranked third in England at one point. I wasn't invited to the England squad trainers' sessions, and I was one of the best athletes there was at that time. I think it played a part on me not getting sports scholarships, when there were people – I was aware of a young gentleman who was, I think he was ranked third or fourth in Wales, but in the British rankings was way, way below me. He got a scholarship to the United States or Canada, and there was me, one of the top athletes at the time, and there didn't seem to be any avenue for me. And I was pretty sure at that time that that had something to do with class. A few years later it was confirmed to me.
>
> WA: In what way?
>
> Joe: There was a telephone conversation which was, 'there were reasons why you weren't invited to the England squad training session, and reasons why there were certain race events that were invitation events and people way below your ranking were invited to them and you weren't'. One race my parents had to phone up and say, 'why isn't Joe invited to race when these other athletes are?' after a few phone calls and a few hot discussions I eventually got invited. So yeah, class and politics played a negative role, but you know, that's not the system, that's individuals. So you can't knock the system for the narrow bands of individuals.
>
> WA: So was that like discrimination?
>
> Joe: Of a sorts. I mean look at Peter Elliott, the guy, the chippie, the carpenter, with the fiasco with Steve Ovett and what have you back then, and the way he was treated. The BBC had to pick him up from the airport, you know. I think, I'm not too sure what happened behind the scenes, but I'm sure whoever was the team captain was not best pleased about that, and I'm sure words would have been said. [...] It's just – okay you've got people who are racist, and people are fearful of other people coming from other countries. Well it's pretty much the same mental attitude with classes and snobbery to a degree. It's not a dissimilar mental pattern.

All these examples – the elective affinity with those close in social space, the struggle with or distaste for interaction with others removed in it, even if now left behind by Lisa as a product of her social trajectory (cf. Savage, 2000: 115), and the judgement and treatment by others (sometimes advantageous, as for Abby, sometimes a deleterious 'class racism', as in Joe's case) on the basis of their perception of oneself – are species of the same phenomenon: *the sense of social distance* granted by perception of the symbols and deportment signifying *objective* social distance. It is this that 'class', as a practical classification constituted through

symbolic struggle, primarily refers to for the interviewees, *not the academic concern with constraints or advantages*, and so it is this that is evoked when the notion is overtly broached. Indeed, even the above witnessed resistance of Claire and others could be seen in this light: Claire's statement clearly reveals that she understands class to be a classification system of social distance which she notes others have used in a derogatory and insulting way – one of the key practical uses of perceptual-linguistic classifications – including in reference to her own 'poshness', but does not view this as particularly disadvantageous for herself. And, since her lifelong experience has been of privilege and limited interaction with distant others in social space, why would she?

Perhaps it is partly for this reason that class barely figured in political proclivities. Very few ventured that it or even kindred issues of inequality were issues of political significance, one of those only on the grounds that it was key to 'misunderstandings' between people (Bernadette), all of whom were in the *dominant* section of social space where symbolic mastery of social affairs is rife rather than, as might be expected in traditional class theory, the dominated regions and none of whom, given this fact, expressed this in terms of collective interests and objectives. The remainder of the interviewees focussed on an assortment of matters – the Iraq war, the NHS, immigration, law and order, the environment (this last topic being the archetype of 'life politics' according to Giddens) – and frequently accepted the existence of class as inevitable when raised ('you're always going to have classes' was a regular refrain). It could be, then, that with the slow removal of class from the symbolic struggle of political discourse, first with the 1979–1997 Conservative government which disavowed the term (witness Thatcher's 'class is a communist concept' epigram) and enfeebled the trade unions, the paramount propagators of class discourse as representatives of 'the working class', [80] then with the implosion of the Soviet Bloc and its construal as corroboration of communism's bankruptcy, and finally the reinvention of the Labour party with its rhetoric of 'no more bosses versus workers', 'class' has been largely stripped of the social justice dimension it had historically acquired leaving only a seemingly apolitical system of classification for rendering the sense of social

[80] The interviewees had, at best, ambivalent attitudes toward trade unions. Amongst the dominated, for example, Phil saw them as useful in battling an *individual* grievance with his immediate superior but nothing else, and was glad of Thatcher's moves against them, whilst Tina described them as a 'waste of time'.

difference. Yet, when any attachment to the notion of 'class consciousness' is abandoned along with the Marxist scheme, it becomes apparent that this is not the real measure of the import of class for politics anyway; instead, this is assumed by the correlation (or more precisely the homology) between the views articulated on any political concerns, as expressions of class habitus, and position and trajectory in social space. In this regard, individualization becomes unstuck. Amongst the upwardly mobile and the cultural faction of the dominant, who are over-represented in the sample, there is a tendency for liberal-leftism, with the other dominant individuals displaying more Conservative tendencies and the one right-leaning social space traveller (Samuel), who incidentally saw class as an important political issue, bringing forth the authoritarian and self-described 'xenophobic' views of his prison-officer father that suffused his lifeworld as a child. The dominated, on the other hand, were more mixed, with left-leaning Labourites (e.g. Phil), right-wing authoritarians (e.g. Gary) and apolitical cynics (e.g. Tina) within their midst. All the orientations in this admittedly compressed report are fully consistent with a modified Bourdieusian framework, attested by a glance at Bourdieu's diagrammatic representation of voting tendencies which shows the cultural faction of the dominant (on account of their domination within the field of power, but also, perhaps, because of some symbolic mastery of social matters given their educational paths) to be more left-wing along with the majority of the dominated, though with allowances for the lower petite-bourgeoisie (like Gary) to be on the right (Bourdieu, 1998b: 5), and his recognition of the refusal of politics amongst those without the cultural capital to engage with it or feel that their view is worthwhile (Bourdieu, 1984: chap. 8).

Conclusion

Theoretical classes and constructed classes are both, in their different yet connected ways, inscribed into the minds of these interviewees and, it might be reasonable to suggest, into the minds of others like them, just as the relational possession of capital that defines theoretical classes is inscribed into their biographical situations. This is not to say there have been no alterations in the social fabric since the immediate post-war period, or even within the last thirty years, as technological advances and awareness and appropriation of other cultural

forms have altered the substance of consumption and the symbolic struggle over 'classes' abated with the discourse of the leaders of the field of power. But this chapter has shown that Beck, Giddens and Bauman have misinterpreted, or at least considerably overstated, the effects of this for class, no doubt in large measure due to the substantialist and collectivist understanding of that concept they themselves presuppose. Instead of ephemeral and reflexive lifestyle pursuits, there are classed practices manifesting deep-seated dispositions. Rather that class sense disappearing in the atomising flux of consumer individualism, there is a continued awareness and articulation of social proximity and distance based on relational properties. In place of class discourse being effaced from collective consciousness save a few isolated and out-of-date pockets, class-based descriptors continue to convey the pernicious sense of difference and similarity across a spectrum of ages and social positions. Rather than outright individualised responsibility for the course of one's trajectory, there is an ambivalent fusion of personal liability – by no means a new phenomenon – with recognition of 'external' constraints. And as opposed to class's removal from the political register, classed viewpoints on topics old and new continue to structure the field of opinion. The correct diagnosis of the state of contemporary consciousness would not seem to be individualization, but, as in the last chapter, the persistence of class – and 'class' – in a changed social environment.

8. Conclusion

"[T]he results of our enquiry", concluded Goldthorpe and his colleagues (1969: 157) in the closing pages of their final volume, "are not at all what might have been expected had the thesis of *embourgeoisement* been a generally valid one." Four decades later this succinct statement can be echoed, with some confidence, regarding the thesis of individualization. Absent was the hypothesised reflexive individual liberated from classed conditions of existence and dispositions, and little sign was seen of the alleged decline of classed tastes, practices and discourse. On the contrary, whatever the age, no matter the occupational position, and whether witnessed in the tales of childhood, education, work histories, lifestyle practices, social identity or linguistic typifications, the firm clutch of class over biographies and perceptual schemes has been shown to remain unbroken in contemporary Britain. Through theoretical scrutiny and empirical investigation, individualization and its Giddensian counterpart have, therefore, been exposed as exaggerated and ungrounded accounts of human action in the current era. This does not, as has been repeated throughout the analysis, necessitate a denial of the broad mutations in economy and society addressed by Beck, Bauman and Giddens or, accordingly, an assertion that the consequences of class are identical to those of yesteryear. But even if we admit that elements of the *substance* of class, its *manifestations* – i.e. the actual symbols and practices attached to positions, whether forms of foreign travel, educational pathways, new lifestyle practices or even occupations – have altered with the social context, the system of *relations* which generates them, and ultimately defines class, remains unchanged. The theories of individualization and reflexivity on the other hand, being exemplars of what Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron (1991: 20ff) called 'spontaneous sociology', that is, of sociological knowledge locked within the erroneous substantialist worldview and hence tantamount to erudite and elaborate prenotions, confuse the shifting signs for their enduring source and thus pronounce dead only what their epistemological short-sightedness prevents them from seeing.

Same Formula, Different Figures

So the image of the classless, individualized worker may be an illusion, but the motif of significant social change is certainly not. Like an equation whose formula stays the same whatever values are assumed by its variables and output, class persists, yet in a new context – shifts in the struggles and balances of power in the economic, political and educational fields, amongst other things – leading it to produce new outcomes. The last two chapters have demonstrated this and, to pull the threads together, the various findings can be recapitulated here in summary form.

1. The education system, the alleged central motor of both individualization and class reproduction, has undergone significant expansion and alteration within the last few decades. Neo-liberal government initiatives have sought to encourage post-sixteen and higher education in a post-industrial economy amongst growing numbers of young people, sanctioning new universities, funding initiatives and information campaigns that supposedly open out the terrain of choice. Furthermore, with the reduction of traditional manual occupations allowing easy transition from classroom to shop floor via familial or social contacts, even vocational options are framed in terms of a reflexive assessment of alternatives in search of some form of self-realisation. However, statistics reveal that paths still remain differentially distributed, and the present research goes some way to establishing why. Choices have not become equally reflexive for all, because *success at school* and, therefore, the *valuation* of school are not identical for all. Differences of parental capital – both economic, in paying for private education, and cultural, in providing the experiences conducive to educational achievement – continue to frame academic performance and subsequent orientations. For the dominant, the mastery of abstraction and symbolism inculcated from early years dovetails with a taste for it – a 'love of learning' in which the demands of the school system and self-realisation are one – whilst for the dominated, the school becomes an institution of exclusion against which they develop oppositional attitudes and prize the practical mastery and bodily ability they do possess. Consequently, willing and perceiving themselves capable, the dominant's projected and actual trajectory is one of straightforward transition through the academic route of A levels and higher education without conscious deliberation beyond the specific subject and university.

Older means of achieving social stasis – direct inheritance of property and family businesses – may have been overshadowed by the inheritance and nurturing of cultural capital, but if anything the reproduction of privilege is thus *as stable as ever* as the upper regions of social space become characterised by what have been called 'normal biographies', that is, linear, unwavering and anticipated life courses at odds with the chronic volatility hypothesised by Beck (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Reay *et al.*, 2005: 33). The dominated, on the other hand, yearn to escape education, experiencing it through their schemes of perception as an alienating, unpractical and expensive waste of time of less utility than pursuing their practical mastery to economic reward, even if, as Tina demonstrated, the precise occupational destination is increasingly uncertain and subject to the reflections of mundane consciousness. In both cases, certain pathways in social space were barred from consideration as the subjective anticipation of likely futures attuned itself to the objective probabilities inscribed in their position and both, therefore, refute individualization.

Yet there are some originating in the lower sections of social space, where in previous generations university was a distant and unfathomable prospect, who have seized upon the expansion programme and ascended in social space. However, rather than prove the weakening of class constraints in late modernity or justify the meritocratic ideal of letting 'talent' succeed, the relational reality of class was present here too. On the one hand, the upwardly mobile's trajectories were set in motion by experiential peculiarities and hidden advantages stemming from their parents' particular positioning in social space, demonstrating the power of relational differences to the last inch, but on the other, their upwards trajectories were hampered by the lack of capital *vis-à-vis* the more affluent counterparts they encountered in their social journey and were therefore disproportionately characterised by toil and struggle.

2. Post-education life and, in particular, the sphere of work have also, like the education system, undergone considerable change since the mid-twentieth century. Geographical mobility – whether in the form of relocating residence or 'consuming places' by fixing a 'tourist gaze' upon them, to use some of John Urry's phrases, and whether within Britain or across the globe – is not uncommon amongst the British population, and the interviewees bore this out. Occupational shifts, furthermore, along with conscious deliberation on mid-career options, were

commonplace amongst the interviewees, and, though it is hard to make any claims on a broad scale and there is a danger of caricaturing the past, it is possible that this could have intensified to some degree under recent economic policies demanding flexibility in a volatile environment. But even if there were more 'contextual discontinuity' than in the past – at least in sheer geographical and occupational terms – the image of attendant disembedding from class cultures and induced reflexivity that could be inferred from these conjoined facts is misleading. Global travel of an extensive nature is, for the most part, a preserve of those distant from the demands of economic necessity who have, in any case, an existing disposition towards geographical movement bred by preparation for higher education, whilst the dominated remain bound to the regional locale save a limited number of inexpensive sojourns. Distance from the home milieu in physical space may act as a new symbolisation of position, but it does not translate into distance from the home milieu in social space.

Movements within the topology of social space are not erratic, random or unpredictable either. Where job shifts and deliberation of options occurred, they were the product of nothing more than mundane consciousness – a general attribute of human existence – contextualised by the capital advantages and accumulated classed experiences and skills furnished by their relative position. There is not the constant 'refashioning of self' and annulment of the past implied by the notion of reflexivity, including versions where reflexivity is stratified by class or, as for Sweetman (2003) a part of the habitus: in a capricious economic climate, some people are perhaps more open to the idea of changing occupation and are, on occasion, led to contemplate their options, but those changes and contemplations are limited by the possibilities inscribed in bodies and things and are, ultimately, far from habitual. They are guided by, but not part of, the habitus.

3. This was even more the case with lifestyle practices. Older activities and symbols of position in social space had waned and, with technological developments, cultural shifts and the appropriation of distant ways of being, new products and practices had suffused lifeworlds, but, as quantitative research has supported (Bennett *et al.*, forthcoming), sharp class cleavages remained and, crucially, the principle of uptake failed to fit the model laid down by Giddens, Beck or Bauman. This was demonstrated in detail through the specific exemplar of musical taste (which followed a broad classical-versus-popular-music division) as

well as more generally for lifestyle practices, both of which were argued to be rooted in early experiences imparted by class position. Moreover, the homology between positions and practices, but also between positions and other behaviours, moral outlooks and apparel, was perceived and articulated as a keen sense of social distance that, entwined with symbolic dominance, often turned into a recognised source of diminished self-worth. The intuition of relational difference, of living in a different 'world' from others, is the cornerstone of social identity and, being hinged on the topography of class, refutes individualization's supposedly more plausible claims that 'identities' have lost their class character in late modernity.

4. Of course the latter claim also applies to the specific use of class *labels* to describe self and others, and though this is only tangential to the Bourdieusian understanding of class it was investigated to fully exhaust the assessment of individualization's explanatory power. However, much to the imagined chagrin of Beck and the others, not only did people use a variety of similar practical constructions to render the differences of social and symbolic space, but, even though half the interviewees did not forward class categorisations as typification bundles without prompting, it was clear that, when pressed, *all* recognised the discourse of social class and, even where there were hesitations and assertions of change, laid bare the range of facets the labels covered for them and used them as foils for distinction. Despite their semantic elasticity, and even if they also viewed them as pernicious and wished to distance themselves from them, the interviewees clearly saw class descriptors as relevant and practical classifications for making sense of experience and their own sense of self. Yet they did not, by and large, see them as politically significant. The late twentieth century national and international political mutations have operated to weaken the discourse of class in the symbolic struggle to establish the legitimate principle of vision and division and mobilise sections of social space against certain injustices. But in a theoretical model with no need for notions of 'class consciousness' this is not a plague of class analysis but merely an empirical trend, itself likely explicable in class terms – i.e. the symbolic dominance of Thatcher's petite bourgeois individualism and its adoption by New Labour for electoral credibility. What really matters for a demonstration of the salience of class for political viewpoints is a homology between positions and position-takings, and this was shown, albeit briefly, to be in full effect.

All in all, individualization, as an account of the interviewees' lives past and present and the fate of class within them, would seem to fall down on all fronts, even if some of the trends it spotlights do supply the new context for the continued operation of class. In line with the epistemological vision upon which the study is founded we can thus suggest that individualization has not been confirmed, but *confuted* by the evidence surveyed, and, furthermore, appeal to the rule of generalisation laid down in Chapter 5 to suggest that local confirmation of the operations of social space supports the logical inference that this *national* relational structure has consequences elsewhere, not just in Bristol but across the UK, albeit with specifications according to regional labour markets and policies and lifeworld idiosyncrasies. This is not to say, however, that the research needs no further backing. The 'moderatum' approach to generalisation also mentioned in Chapter 5 encourages the exercise of caution in generalising all of what has been found, and indeed there is a sense in which some of the inductively-established themes require fleshing out or refining through further investigation. A follow-up project aiming to do precisely this, doubling the number of interviewees to more satisfactorily 'saturate' some of the specific findings, to use the apt phrase of Glaser and Strauss (1967), is currently underway and will be reported in due course. Even without foresight of the future research's elaborations, however, we can, in closing, consider the bearing of the present study on current policy debates.

In Defence of 'Emancipation'

Some of the changes identified have been brought by advancements in communications and transport capabilities, and some have been artefacts of the increasing interdependence of the global division of labour, but others have been the product of political visions and initiatives expressly designed to reduce inequality. It is significant, therefore, that the latter have failed to fulfil their stated purpose, but it is not difficult to see why. Take, for example, the shifts induced within the educational field by the Conservative government in the early nineties. Though in good measure motivated by the desire to subordinate education, conceived as a factory of human capital, to the demands of the post-industrial economy – smuggled in proclamations that increased tertiary education would be 'key to national success' – the abolition of the 'binary system' polarising

polytechnics and universities to increase degree-awarding capacities and manipulations of the school system were also ostensibly (and no doubt sincerely) designed to 'widen opportunities' and ensure that all children were 'free to choose' – one might even add 'reflexively' – their post-16 options.[81] But, without denying that increased numbers of dominated individuals have attained degrees, in reality its primary consequence was a restratification of the field of higher education in much the same way as observed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) in 1960s France, with an extra trickle of dominated individuals pursuing mainly higher credentialisation of existing practical, and therefore devalued, knowledge within devalued institutions. Embracing the meritocratic principle that '*natural* skills, talents, energy, thrift and inventiveness' must be 'released, not suppressed' (emphasis added), the Conservatives failed to address the *guiding principle* of the so-called 'free' choices and the *social source* of different skills and talents: the habitus, as expectations of the future and dispositions ultimately grounded in inequalities of capital. It is no surprise that class inequalities persisted, therefore, seeing as they were never actually addressed.

The situation is not much better today. It could be argued that precisely what the Conservatives missed has been taken up by New Labour in a bid to ensure educational success 'for the many not the few', to use their foundational slogan. The Prime Minister, for instance, has recently foregrounded social mobility and fingered the low aspirations of disadvantaged individuals as a prime hindrance, whilst the flagship Sure Start programme would appear to be aimed at equalising cultural capital through such initiatives as, for example, information packs and leaflets for parents on supplementary home-learning techniques to improve their child's educational achievement. But if looked at closely, the same errors are present. The home-learning guidance of the Sure Start programme, for example, presupposes the parental ability, patience and time afforded by *existing* capital – both cultural *and* economic – beyond the levels afforded by the government's compensatory schemes (grants, credits, etc), as well as the kind of positive valuation of education (which logically assumes a devaluation of manual work), and therefore inclination to participate in children's education, witnessed only

---

[81] All quotations are taken from the Conservatives 1992 General Election Manifesto, archived online by the Political Sciences Resources service of Keele University at http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/man/ con92.htm#all.

amongst the capital-rich. It therefore not only hopelessly endeavours to miraculously conjure cultural capital out of a vacuum, in contrast to the early immersion in a 'cultured' lifeworld enabling steady accumulation amongst the dominant, but, in a model exhibition of symbolic violence, it presses dominant orientations upon those with alternative experiences of education whilst 'responsibilising' parents such that educational failure can be explained via tropes of 'bad parenting'. The current discourse on social mobility that frames such policies fares no better. The key to raising aspirations, so the official rhetoric holds, lies in instilling within children from disadvantaged backgrounds not just the 'work ethic' – the realisation 'that there are jobs available if you make the effort' – but the 'learning ethic' – 'the idea that if you work hard and study at school there are great opportunities ahead and therefore you must take up learning'.[82] Again pushing the dominant's values, the products of privileged conditions of existence, upon the dominated, this statement aims to alter subjective aspirations *without changing the objective probabilities* inscribed in capital possession which generate realistic expectations of the future, with two likely consequences: a rejection of the 'learning ethic' by those rejected by it, subsequently interpreted as personal failure on the parents' and children's behalf, or a mismatch of expectations and likelihoods as children are exhorted to build lofty hopes, dreams and expectations that must, in reality, be demolished by the actual structure of the labour market (cf. Bourdieu, 1984: 143ff).

Labour's intention to foster the learning ethic amongst all children is, ultimately, contradicted by their commitment to the same flawed principle that undermined the Conservative's policies: *meritocracy*, often masquerading as 'equality of opportunity'. Thus the Prime Minister speaks of creating 'a Britain where instead of talent wasted, effort unrewarded, enterprise stifled, potential unfulfilled, we see effort praised, ambition fulfilled, potential realised', 'a Britain where everyone, no matter what their background, should be able to rise as far as their talents can take them' and a Britain where social justice is 'expressed by social mobility, not compensating people for what they don't have, but helping people develop what they do have, their talents, their potential and their ability'.

---

[82] All quotes are taken from a speech on social mobility delivered by the Prime Minister to educational professionals on 23rd June 2008, archived online by the Prime Minister's Office: http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page16181.

The social conditions of 'talent' and 'effort' are never addressed, and even if, unlike the Conservatives, Labour recognise that 'talents can take many forms and not just one – practical, creative, communication abilities, analytical intelligence as well', the fact that vastly contrasting social conditions produce 'practical' talents and 'analytical intelligence' is ignored. As long as this is the case, and considering these different 'talents' are differentially rewarded economically and symbolically, there cannot truly be 'equality of opportunity'. One is tempted, therefore, to suggest that only some form of redistribution of economic capital, and thus distance from necessity, alongside support mechanisms extending those of the Sure Start programme, could make a difference, with the additional effect that it might bite into the pernicious premise upon which meritocracy is founded: the existence of a hierarchy of worth, or *symbolic* capital, corresponding with differential remuneration as well as perceived 'talent'.[83]

None of this is to deny the significance of issues gathered under the label of 'life politics', but it is to suggest that, in opposition to Giddens' influential argument over the last fifteen years or so, the supposedly old-fashioned and secondary goals of 'emancipatory politics' retain their centrality in the sphere of political debate and that, against the Third Way, a more progressive perspective may hold the key to a society in which one's life is no longer furtively tracked and judged from birth. In fact, in so far as stances on 'post-material' issues are themselves patterned according to material and cultural conditions of existence, it could be argued that the inequalities addressed by emancipatory politics *take primacy over* life politics, for if truly democratic solutions to the latter, where all have the inclination, ability and information to participate effectively, are to be attained, then the former must surely be confronted. Unfortunately, in a time when the economic interests of those who command the field of power structure the field of politics more than the lessons of autonomous empirical research, the frustrating certainty is that the dominant political agents are unlikely to spontaneously take up this imperative challenge. That being the case, the formidable but vital task of the engaged social scientist, in concert with those who speak for and with the dominated – including trade unions (whether or not they use the language of

---

[83] I have focussed here on education and social mobility, but current employment policies are problematic too. Lifelong learning and reskilling could be positive facets of occupational life, for example, if only the range of options were not narrowed by economic or cultural barriers and, more importantly, *forced* upon individuals by the caprices of *laissez faire* capitalism.

'class'), kindred organisations, associations, movements and intellectuals working collectively within and across nations – is to persistently and vociferously resist, 'fire back' and make the scientifically-informed case for social justice in the belief that, if not given by the laws of history, as Marx supposed, a more equitable society can nevertheless be achieved through reason, commitment and action.

References

Adams, M. (2006) 'Hybridizing Habitus and Reflexivity: Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Identity?' *Sociology*, 40 (3): 511–528.

Adkins, L. (2003) 'Reflexivity: Freedom or Habit of Gender?' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20 (6): 21–42.

Adkins, L. and Skeggs, B. (Eds.) (2004) *Feminism After Bourdieu*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Adonis, A. and Pollard, S. (1997) *A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society*. London: Penguin.

Adorno, T. W. and Horkheimer, M. (1944/1997) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso.

Alexander, J. C. (1995) *Fin de Siècle Social Theory: Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason*. London: Verso.

Allatt, P. (1993) 'Becoming Privileged: The Role of Family Processes' in I. Bates and G. Riseborough (Eds.) *Youth and Inequality*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 139–159.

Alt, J. (1976) 'Beyond Class: The Decline of Industrial Labor and Leisure' *Telos*, 28: 55–80.

Amirzada, H. (2006) 'Don't Waste Our Talents, We're Not Illiterate Idiots' *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, September 8th 2006, p. 12.

Anthias, F. (1999) 'Theorising Identity, Difference and Social Divisions' in M. O'Brien, S. Penna and C. Hay (Eds.) *Theorising Modernity: Reflexivity, Environment and Identity in Giddens' Social Theory*. London: Longman, pp. 156–178.

Archer, L., Hollingworth, S. and Halsall, A. (2007) 'University's not for Me – I'm a Nike Person: Urban, Working-Class Young People's Negotiations of 'Style', Identity and Educational Engagement' *Sociology*, 41 (2): 219–237.

Archer, L., Hutchings, M. and Ross, A. (2003) *Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of Exclusion and Inclusion*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Archer, M. S. (1982) 'Morphogenesis versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action' *British Journal of Sociology*, 33 (4): 455–483.

Archer, M. S. (2000) *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M. S. (2003) *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M. S. (2007) *Making our Way through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ashworth, P. (2003) 'An Approach to Phenomenological Psychology: The Contingencies of the Lifeworld' *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 34 (2): 145–156.

Atkinson, W. (2007a) 'Anthony Giddens as Adversary of Class Analysis' *Sociology*, 41 (3): 533–549.

Atkinson, W. (2007b) 'Beck, Individualization and the Death of Class: A Critique' *The British Journal of Sociology,* 58 (3): 349–366.

Atkinson, W. (2007c) 'Beyond False Oppositions: A Reply to Beck' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 58 (4): 707–715.

Ball, S. J. (2003) *Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Classes and Social Advantage*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Ball, S. J. (2008) *The Education Debate*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Ball, S. J., Maguire, M. and Macrae, S. (2000) *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economies in the Global City*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Baudrillard, J. (2001) *Selected Writings* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1982) *Memories of Class: The Pre-History and After-Life of Class.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bauman, Z. (1987) *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1988) *Freedom*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Bauman, Z. (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1991) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1992) *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.

Bauman, Z. (1995) *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bauman, Z. (1998a) *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bauman, Z. (1998b) *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (1999) *In Search of Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2001) *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2002) *Society Under Siege*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2004a) *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2004b) *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2005) *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2007a) *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2007b) *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. and Tester, K. (2001) *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

Beck, U. (1994) 'The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization' in U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 1–54.

Beck, U. (1995) *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1997) *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1998) *Democracy Without Enemies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (2000a) *The Brave New World of Work*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (2000b) *What is Globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (2000c) 'The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 51 (1): 79–105.

Beck, U. (2002) 'The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19 (1–2): 17–44.

Beck, U. (2005) *Power in the Global Age: A New Global Political Economy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (2007) 'Beyond Class and Nation: Reframing Social Inequalities in a Globalizing World' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 58 (4): 679–705.

Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995) *The Normal Chaos of Love*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*. London: Sage.

Beck, U. and Lau, C. (2005) 'Second Modernity as a Research Agenda: Theoretical and Empirical Explorations in the 'Meta-Change' of Modern Society' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56 (4): 525–557.

Beck, U. and Willms, J. (2004) *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, U., Bonss, W. and Lau, C. (2003) 'The Theory of Reflexive Modernization: Problematic, Hypotheses and Research Programme' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20 (2): 1–33.

Beilharz, P. (2000) *Zygmunt Bauman: Dialectic of Modernity*. London: Sage.

Bell, D. (1973) *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. New York: Basic Books.

Bell, D. (1976) *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. London: Heinemann.

Bennett, A. (1999) 'Subcultures or Neo-Tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste' *Sociology*, 33 (3): 599–617.

Bennett, T. (2007) 'Habitus *Clivé*: Aesthetics and Politics in the Work of Pierre Bourdieu' *New Literary History*, 38: 201–228.

Bennett, T., Savage, M., Silva, E. B. and Warde, A. (forthcoming) *Culture, Class, Distinction*. London: Routledge.

Berger, P. L. (1977) *Facing Up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics, and Religion*. New York: Basic Books.

Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Penguin.

Berger, P. L., Berger, B. and Kellner, H. (1974) *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Berlin, I. (1969) *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bernstein, B. (1971) *Class, Codes and Control, Volume 1: Theoretical Studies towards a Sociology of Language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bernstein, R. J. (1979) *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*. London: Methuen.

Beynon, H. (1984) *Working for Ford* (2nd Ed.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Bhaskar, R. (1975) *A Realist Theory of Science*. Leeds: Leeds Books.

Bhaskar, R. (1998) *The Possibility of Naturalism* (3rd Ed.). London: Routledge.

Blau, P. M. and Duncan, O. D. (1967) *The American Occupational Structure*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Boltanski, L. (1984) 'How a Social Group Objectified Itself: "Cadres" in France, 1936–45' *Social Science Information*, 23 (3): 469–491.

Boltanski, L. (1987) *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, È. (2005) *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Bottero, W. (2004) 'Class Identities and the Identity of Class' *Sociology*, 38 (5): 985–1003.

Bottero, W. and Prandy, K. (2003) 'Social Interaction Distance and Stratification' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 54 (2): 177–197.

Bourdieu, P. (1966) 'Condition de classe et position de classe' *Archives Européenes de Sociologie*, 7: 201–229.

Bourdieu, P. (1968) 'Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge' *Social Research*, 35 (4): 681–706.

Bourdieu, P. (1971) 'Systems of Education and Systems of Thought' in M. F. D. Young (Ed.) *Knowledge and Control: New Directions in the Sociology of Education*. London: Collier-Macmillan, pp. 189–207.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1979) *Algeria 1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1981) 'Men and Machines' in K. Knorr-Cetina and A. V. Cicourel (Eds.) *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of*

Micro- and Macro-Sociologies. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 304–317.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1987) 'What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups' *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32: 1–17.

Bourdieu, P. (1988a) 'Vive La Crise! For Heterodoxy in Social Science' *Theory and Society*, 17 (5): 773–787.

Bourdieu, P. (1988b) *Homo Academicus*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990a) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990b) *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991a) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991b) *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1993a) *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1993b) 'Concluding Remarks: For a Sociogenetic Understanding of Intellectual Works' in C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma and M. Postone, (Eds.) *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 263–275.

Bourdieu, P. (1996a) *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1996b) *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1997a) 'The Forms of Capital' in A. H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A. S. Wells (Eds.) *Education: Culture, Economy, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 46–58.

Bourdieu, P. (1997b) 'Passport to Duke' *Metaphilsophy*, 28 (4): 449–455.

Bourdieu, P. (1998a) *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998b) *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998c) *On Television and Journalism*. London: Pluto Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1999) 'The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas' in R. Shusterman (Ed.) *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Cambridge: Blackwell, pp. 220–228.

Bourdieu, P. (2000a) *Pascalian Meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2000b) 'The Biographical Illusion' in P. du Gay, J. Evans and P. Redman (Eds.) *Identity: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 297–303.

Bourdieu, P. (2000c) 'Making the Economic Habitus: Algerian Workers Revisited' *Ethnography*, 1 (1): 17–41.

Bourdieu, P. (2001) *Masculine Domination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2003) 'Participant Objectivation' *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9 (2): 281–294.

Bourdieu, P. (2004) *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2005) *The Social Structures of the Economy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. and Boltanski, L. (1981) 'The Educational System and the Economy: Titles and Jobs' in C. C. Lemert (Ed.) *French Sociology: Rupture and Renewal Since 1968*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.141–151.

Bourdieu, P. and Eagleton, T. (1992) 'Doxa and Common Life' *New Left Review*, 192: 111–121.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.-C. (1979) *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.-C. (1990) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (2nd Ed.). London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992) *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D. (2001) 'NewLiberalSpeak: Notes on the New Planetary Vulgate' *Radical Philosophy*, 105: 2–5.

Bourdieu, P., Chamboredon, J.-C. and Passeron, J.-C. (1991) *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries*. New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Bourdieu, P., Darbel, A and Schnapper, D. (1991) *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. *et al.* (1999) *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

Bradley, H., Erickson, M. Stephenson, C. and Williams, S. (2000) *Myths at Work*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brannen, J. and Nilsen, A. (2005) 'Individualisation, Choice and Structure: A Discussion of Current Trends in Sociological Analysis' *The Sociological Review*, 53 (3): 412–428.

Breen, R. and Rottman, D. B. (1995) *Class Stratification: A Comparative Perspective*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Brubaker, R. (2002) 'Ethnicity without Groups' *Archives Européenes de Sociologie*, 43 (2): 163–189.

Bryman, A. (1988) *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Bufton, S. (2003) 'The Lifeworld of the University Student: Habitus and Social Class' *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 34 (2): 207–234.

Burawoy, M. (1979) *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labour Process Under Monopoly Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burawoy, M. (2005) '2004 American Sociological Association Presidential Address: For Public Sociology' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56 (2): 259–294.

Byrne, B. (2006) *White Lives: The Interplay of 'Race', Class and Gender in Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.

Callinicos, A. (1999) *Social Theory: An Historical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Cannadine, D. (1998) *Class in Britain*. London: Penguin.

Cassirer, E. (1923) *Substance and Function and Einstein's Theory of Relativity*. Chicago: Open Court.

Chan, T. W. and Goldthorpe, J. H. (2004) 'Is There a Status Order in Contemporary British Society? Evidence from the Occupational Structure of Friendship' *European Sociological Review*, 20 (5): 383–401.

Chan, T. W. and Goldthorpe, J. H. (2005) 'The Social Stratification of Theatre, Dance and Cinema Attendance' *Cultural Trends*, 14 (3): 193–212.

Chan, T. W. and Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007a) 'Class and Status: The Conceptual Distinction and its Empirical Relevance' *American Sociological Review*, 72: 512–532.

Chan, T. W. and Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007b) 'Social Stratification and Cultural Consumption: Music in England' *European Sociological Review*, 23 (1): 1–19.

Chan, T. W. and Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007c) 'Social Status and Newspaper Readership' *The American Journal of Sociology*, 112 (4): 1095–1134.

Charlesworth, S. J. (2000) *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cicourel, A. V. (1993) 'Aspects of Structural and Processual Theories of Knowledge' in C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma and M. Postone (Eds.) *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 89–115.

Clark, T. N. (2001) 'The Debate over 'Are Social Classes Dying?'' in T. N. Clark and S. M. Lipset (Eds.) *The Breakdown of Class Politics: A Debate on Post-Industrial Stratification*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 273–319.

Clark, T. N. and Lipset, S. M. (1991) 'Are Social Classes Dying?' *International Sociology*, 6 (4): 397–410.

Clark, T. N. and Lipset, S. M. (Eds.) (2001) *The Breakdown of Class Politics: A Debate on Post-Industrial Stratification*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press

Clarke, J., Critcher, C. and Johnson, R. (Eds.) (1979) *Working-Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory*. London: Hutchinson.

Craib, I. (1992) *Anthony Giddens*. London: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (1998) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. London: Sage.

Crompton, R. (1996) 'The Fragmentation of Class Analysis' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47 (1): 56–67.

Crompton, R. (1998) *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Crompton, R. and Scott, J. (2000) 'Introduction: The State of Class Analysis' in R. Crompton, F. Devine, M. Savage and J. Scott (Eds.) *Renewing Class Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1–15.

Crompton, R. and Scott, J. (2005) 'Class Analysis: Beyond the Cultural Turn' in F. Devine, M. Savage, J. Scott and R. Crompton (Eds.) *Rethinking Class: Culture, Identities and Lifestyle*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 186–203.

Crompton, R., Devine, F., Savage, M. and Scott, J. (Eds.) (2000) *Renewing Class Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Crook, S., Pakulski, J. and Waters, M. (1992) *Postmodernization: Change in Advanced Society*. London: Sage.

Crossley, N. (2001) *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire*. London: Sage.

Crossley, N. (2004) 'The Circuit Trainer's Habitus: Reflexive Body Techniques and the Sociality of the Workout' *Body and Society*, 10 (1): 37–69.

Crossley, N. (2006) *Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Dennis, N., Henriques, F. and Slaughter, C. (1969) *Coal is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community* (2nd Ed.). London: Tavistock.

Devine, F. (1992) *Affluent Workers Revisited: Privatism and the Working Class*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Devine, F. (1998) 'Class Analysis and the Stability of Class Relations' *Sociology*, 32 (1): 23–42.

Devine, F. (2004) *Class Practices: How Parents Help Their Children Get Good Jobs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Devine, F. and Savage, M. (2000) 'Conclusion: Renewing Class Analysis' in R. Crompton, F. Devine, M. Savage and J. Scott (Eds.) *Renewing Class Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 184–199.

Devine, F. and Savage, M. (2005) 'The Cultural Turn, Sociology and Class Analysis' in F. Devine, M. Savage, J. Scott and R. Crompton (Eds.) *Rethinking Class: Culture, Identities and Lifestyle*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 1–23.

Dewey, J. (1922) *Human Nature and Conduct*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Dreyfus, H. and Rabinow, P. (1993) 'Can there be a Science of Existential Structure and Social Meaning?' in C. Calhoun, E. LiPuma and M. Postone (Eds.) *Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 35–44.

Du-Bois Reymond, M. (1998) ''I Don't Want to Commit Myself Yet': Young People's Life Concepts' *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1 (1): 44–68.

Durkheim, É. (1982) *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York: The Free Press.

Edwards, R., Ranson, S. and Strain, M. (2002) 'Reflexivity: Towards a Theory of Lifelong Learning' *International Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 21 (6): 525–536.

Ehrenreich, B. and Ehrenreich, J. (1979) 'The Professional-Managerial Class' in P. Walker (Ed.) *Between Labour and Capital*. Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester, pp. 5–45.

Elder-Vass, D. (2007) 'Reconciling Archer and Bourdieu in an Emergentist Theory of Action' *Sociological Theory*, 25 (4): 325–346.

Elliott, A. (2002) 'Beck's Sociology of Risk: A Critical Assessment' *Sociology*, 36 (2): 293–315.

Emmison, M. and Western, M. (1990) 'Social Class and Social Identity: A Comment on Marshall *et al.*' *Sociology*, 24 (2): 241–253.

Endress, M. (2005) 'Reflexivity, Reality, and Relationality: The Inadequacy of Bourdieu's Critique of the Phenomenological Tradition in Sociology' in M. Endress, G. Psathas and H. Nasu (Eds.) *Explorations of the Life-World: Continuing Dialogues with Alfred Schutz*. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, pp. 51–74.

Erikson, R. and Goldthorpe, J. H. (1992) *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Esping-Anderson, G. (Ed.) (1993) *Changing Classes: Stratification and Mobility in Post-Industrial Societies*. London: Sage.

Evans, G. (2007) *Educational Failure and Working Class White Children in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fairclough, N. (2000) *New Labour, New Language*. London: Routledge.

Fantasia, R. (1995) 'From Class Consciousness to Culture, Action, and Organization' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21: 269–287.

Farnell, B. (2000) 'Getting out of the *Habitus*: An Alternative Model of Dynamically Embodied Social Action' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6: 397–418.

Featherstone, M. (1991) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage.

Fenton, S. and Dermott, E. (2006) 'Fragmented Careers? Winners and Losers in Young Adult Labour Markets' *Work, Employment and Society*, 20 (2): 205–221.

Fevre, R. (2007) 'Employment Insecurity and Social Theory: The Power of Nightmares' *Work, Employment and Society*, 21 (3): 517–535.

Frère, B. (2004) 'Genetic Structuralism, Psychological Sociology and Pragmatic Social Actor Theory: Proposals for a Convergence of French Sociologies' *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21 (3): 85–99.

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (2007) *Young People and Social Change: New Perspectives* (2nd Ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Furnbank, P. N. (1985) *Unholy Pleasure or the Idea of Social Class*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gaber, A. (2005) 'Sociology in the Media: Over-looked and Under-Valued?' *Network*, 92: 10–11.

Gallie, D. (1991) 'John Goldthorpe's Critique of Liberal Theories of Industrialism' in J. Clark, C. Modgil and S. Modgil (Eds.) *John H. Goldthorpe: Consensus and Controversy*. London: The Falmer Press, pp. 29–45.

Gane, N. (2001a) 'Chasing the "Runaway World": The Politics of Recent Globalization Theory' *Acta Sociologica*, 44 (1): 81–89.

Gane, N. (2001b) 'Zygmunt Bauman: Liquid Modernity and Beyond' *Acta Sociologica*, 44 (3): 267–275.

Gane, N. (2004) *The Future of Social Theory*. London: Continuum.

Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Gayo-Cal, M., Savage, M. and Warde, A. (2006) 'A Cultural Map of the United Kingdom, 2003' *Cultural Trends*, 15 (2–3): 213–237.

Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. J. and Bowe, R. (1995) *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Giddens, A. (1976) *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies*. London: Hutchinson.

Giddens, A. (1979) *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. London: Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1981) *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (2nd Ed.). London: Hutchinson.

Giddens, A. (1982) *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1987) *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1994a) 'Living in a Post-Traditional Society' in U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 56–109.

Giddens, A. (1994b) *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1994c) 'Risk, Trust, Reflexivity' in U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 184–197.

Giddens, A. (1995) *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism. Volume One: Power, Property and the State* (2nd Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1997) 'Risk Society: The Context of British Politics' in J. Franklin (Ed.) *The Politics of Risk Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 23–34.

Giddens, A. (1998) *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (2000) *The Third Way and Its Critics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (2001a) 'Introduction' in A. Giddens (Ed.) *The Global Third Way Debate*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 1–24.

Giddens, A. (2001b) *Sociology* (4th Ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (2002) *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives* (2nd Ed.). London: Profile.

Giddens, A. (2003) 'An Interview with Anthony Giddens' *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 3 (3): 387–399.

Giddens, A. (2006) *Sociology* (5th Ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (2007) *Europe in the Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine.

Goffman, E. (1951) 'Symbols of Class Status' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 2 (4): 294–304.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (with Llewellyn, C. and Payne, C.) (1980) *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (with Llewellyn, C. and Payne, C.) (1987) *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (2nd Ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (1988) 'Intellectuals and the Working Class in Modern Britain' in D. Rose (Ed.) *Social Stratification and Economic Change*. London: Hutchinson, pp. 39–56.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (1991) 'A Response' in J. Clark, C. Modgil and S. Modgil (Eds.) *John H. Goldthorpe: Consensus and Controversy*. London: The Falmer Press. pp. 399–438.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (1992) 'Employment, Class, and Mobility: A Critique of Liberal and Marxist Theories of Long-Term Change' in H. Haferkamp and N. J. Smelser (Eds.) *Social Change and Modernity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 123–147.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2000) *On Sociology: Numbers, Narratives, and the Integration of Research and Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2002) 'Globalisation and Social Class' *West European Politics*. 25 (3): 1–28.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007a) *On Sociology, Second Edition: Volume One: Critique and Program*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007b) *On Sociology, Second Edition: Volume Two: Illustration and Retrospect*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007c) *Cultural Capital: Some Critical Observations*. University of Oxford, Sociology Working Papers 2007-07.

Goldthorpe, J. H. and Lockwood, D. (1964) 'Affluence and the British Class Structure' *The Sociological Review*, 11 (2): 133–163.

Goldthorpe, J. H. and McKnight, A. (2006) 'The Economic Basis of Social Class' in S. Morgan, D. B. Grusky and G. S. Fields (Eds.) *Mobility and Inequality: Frontiers of Research from Sociology and Economics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 109–136.

Goldthorpe, J. H. and Marshall, G. (1992) 'The Promising Future of Class Analysis: A Response to Recent Critiques' *Sociology*, 26 (3): 381–400.

Goldthorpe, J. H., Lockwood, D., Bechhofer, F. and Platt, J. (1968a) *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldthorpe, J. H., Lockwood, D., Bechhofer, F. and Platt, J. (1968b) *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldthorpe, J. H., Lockwood, D., Bechhofer, F. and Platt, J. (1969) *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gorz, A. (1982) *Farewell to the Working Class*. London: Pluto Press.

Gray, J. (1998) *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. London: Granta Books.

Gurwitsch, A. (1970) 'Problems of the Life-World' in M. Natanson (Ed.) *Phenomenology and Social Reality: Essays in Memory of Alfred Schutz*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, pp. 35–61.

Habermas, J. (1987) *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hall, S. and Jacques, M. (Eds.) (1989) *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Halsey, A. H., Heath, A. F. and Ridge, J. M. (1980) *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hammersley, M. (1997) 'Qualitative Data Archiving: Some Reflections on its Prospects and Problems' *Sociology,* 31 (1): 131–142.

Harvey, D. (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hatcher, R. (1998) 'Class Differentials in Education: Rational Choices?' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19 (1): 5–24.

Heath, A., Martin, J. and Elgenius, G. (2007) 'Who Do We Think We Are? The Decline of Traditional Identities' in A. Park, J. Curtice, K. Thomson, M. Phillips and M. Johnson (Eds.) *British Social Attitudes: The 23rd Report – Perspectives on a Changing Society*. London: Sage, pp. 1–34.

Heritage, J. (1984) *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hindess, B. (1987) *Politics and Class Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hobsbawm, E. (1981) 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?' in M. Jacques and F. Mulhern (Eds.) *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* London: Verso, pp. 1–19.

Hodkinson, P. and Sparkes, A. C. (1997) 'Careership: A Sociological Theory of Career Decision Making' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18 (1): 29–44.

Hoggart, R. (1957) *The Uses of Literacy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Howard, C. (2007) 'Three Models of Individualized Biography' in C. Howard (Ed.) *Contested Individualization: Debates About Contemporary Personhood*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 25–43.

Husserl, E. (1973) *Experience and Judgement: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, E. (1977) *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Inglehart, R. (1977) *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. (1990) *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Inglis, D., Stockman, N. and Surridge, P. (2000) 'Bourdieu and Methodological Polytheism: Taking Sociology Forward in the Twenty-First Century' in J. Eldridge, S. Scott, C. Warhurst and A. Witz (Eds.) *For Sociology: Legacies and Prospects*. Durham: Sociologypress, pp. 107–118.

Jackson, B. (1972) *Working Class Community*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Jackson, B. and Marsden, D. (1962) *Education and the Working Class*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Jackson, S. and Rees, A. (2007) 'The Appalling Appeal of Nature: The Popular Influence of Evolutionary Psychology as a Problem for Sociology' *Sociology*, 41 (5): 917–930.

Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Jenkins, R. (1996) *Social Identity*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, R. (2002) *Pierre Bourdieu* (Revised Ed.). London: Routledge.

Joyce, P. (1991) *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kerr, C., Dunlop, J. T., Harbison, F. H. and Myers, C. A. (1962) *Industrialism and Industrial Man*. London: Heinemann.

Kingston, P. W. (2000) *The Classless Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (1977) *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kumar, K. (1995) *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

Lahire, B. (2003) 'From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions: Towards a Sociology at the Level of the Individual' *Poetics*, 31 (5): 329–355.

Laing, R. D. (1965) *The Divided Self: An Existential Study of Sanity and Madness*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Lakatos, I. (1970) 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes' in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (Eds.) *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 91-196.

Lamont, M. (1992) *Money, Morals and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lamont, M. (2000) *The Dignity of Working Men*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Lareau, A. (2000) *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Schooling* (2nd Ed.). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Lareau, A. (2003) *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lash, S. (1990) *Sociology of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.

Lash, S. (1994) 'Reflexivity and its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community' in U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 110–173.

Lash, S. (2002) 'Individualization in a Non-Linear Mode' in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its social and Political Consequences*. London: Sage, pp. vii–xiii.

Lash, S. and Urry, J. (1987) *The End of Organized Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lash, S. and Urry, J. (1994) *Economies of Signs and Space*. London: Sage.

Lau, R. W. K. (2004) 'Habitus and the Practical Logic of Practice: An Interpretation' *Sociology*, 38 (2): 369–387.

Lawler, S. (2000) *Mothering the Self: Mothers, Daughters, Subjects*. London: Routledge.

Lawler, S. (2002) 'Narrative in Social Research' in T. May (Ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage, pp. 242–258.

Lee, D. J. and Turner, B. S. (Eds.) (1996) *Conflicts About Class: Debating Inequality in Late Industrialism*. London: Longmann.

Lehmann, W. (2007) *Choosing to Labour? School-Work Transitions and Social Class*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Leisering, L. and Leibfried, S. (1999) *Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States: United Germany in Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lenski, G. E. (1952) 'Social Classes: Statistical Strata or Social Groups?' *American Journal of Sociology*, 58 (2): 139–144.

Levitas. R. (2005) *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour* (2nd Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lockwood, D. (1958) *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Lockwood, D. (1966) 'Sources of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society' *The Sociological Review*, 14 (3): 249–167.

Longhurst, B. and Savage, M. (1996) 'Social Class, Consumption and the Influence of Bourdieu: Some Critical Issues' in S. Edgell, K. Hetherington and A. Warde (Eds.) *Consumption Matters*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 274–301.

Lovell, T. (2000) 'Thinking Feminism With and Against Bourdieu' in B. Fowler (Ed.) *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 27–48.

Lovell, T. (2004) 'Bourdieu, Class and Gender: 'The Return of the Living Dead'?' in L. Adkins and B. Skeggs (Eds.) *Feminism After Bourdieu*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 37–56.

Loyal, S. (2003) *The Sociology of Anthony Giddens*. London: Pluto Press.

Loyal, S. and Barnes, B. (2001) '"Agency" as a Red Herring in Social Theory' *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 31 (4): 507–524.

Luckmann, T. (1983) *Life-Wold and Social Realities*. London: Heinemann.

Lukes, S. (2006) *Individualism* (2nd Ed.). Colchester: ECPR press.

MacIntyre, A. (1981) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. London: Duckworth.

McLennan, G. (1998) '*Fin de Sociologie?* The Dilemmas of Multidimensional Social Theory' *New Left Review*, 230: 58–90.

McLennan, G. (2004) 'Travelling with Vehicular Ideas: The Case of the Third Way' *Economy and Society*, 33 (4): 484–499.

McNay, L. (1999) 'Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity' *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16 (1): 95–117.

Mahony, P. and Zmroczek, C. (Eds.) (1997) *Class Matters: 'Working-Class' Women's Perspectives on Social Class*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Marcoulatos, I. (2001) 'Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu on *Embodied Significance*' *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 31 (1): 1–27.

Marcuse, H. (1964) *One-Dimensional Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Margolis, J. (1999) 'Pierre Bourdieu: *Habitus* and the Logic of Practice' in R. Shusterman (Ed.) *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 64–83.

Marsh, C. (1982) *The Survey Method: The Contribution of Surveys to Sociological Explanation*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Marshall, G. (1988) 'Some Remarks on the Study of Working-Class Consciousness' in D. Rose (Ed.) *Social Stratification and Economic Change*. London: Hutchinson, pp. 98–126.

Marshall, G. (1991) 'John Goldthorpe and Class Analysis' in J. Clark, C. Modgil and S. Modgil (Eds.) *John H. Goldthorpe: Consensus and Controversy*. London: The Falmer Press, pp. 51–62.

Marshall, G. (1997) *Repositioning Class: Social Inequality in Industrial Societies*. London: Sage.

Marshall, G., Newby, H., Rose, D. and Vogler, C. (1988) *Social Class in Modern Britain*. London: Hutchinson.

Marx, K. (1959) *Capital* (vol. 3). London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1848/1992) *The Communist Manifesto*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marwick, A. (1990) *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA Since 1930* (2nd Ed.). Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Maslow, A. H. (1987) *Motivation and Personality* (3rd Ed.). New York: Longman.

Mercer, K. (1990) 'Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics' in J. Rutherford (Ed.) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 43–71.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962) *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge.

Mills, C. W. (1940) 'Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive' *American Sociological Review*, 5 (6): 904–913.

Mills, C. W. (1970) *The Sociological Imagination*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Mitchell, J. (1983) 'Case and Situational Analysis' *The Sociological Review*, 31 (2): 187–211.

Morris, L. and Scott, J. (1996) 'The Attenuation of Class Analysis: Some Comments on G. Marshall, S. Roberts and C. Burgoyne, 'Social Class and the Underclass in Britain and the United States'' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47 (1): 45–55.

Moustakas, C. (1994) *Phenomenological Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Mouzelis, N. (1995) *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong? Diagnosis and Remedies*. London: Routledge.

Murphy, R. (1988) *Social Closure: The Theory of Monopolization and Exclusion.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Myles, J. F. (2004) 'From Doxa to Experience: Issues in Bourdieu's Adoption of Husserlian Phenomenology' *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21 (2): 91–107.

Mythen, G. (2005a) 'Employment, Individualization and Insecurity: Rethinking the Risk Society Perspective' *The Sociological Review*, 53 (1): 129–149.

Mythen, G. (2005b) 'From Goods to Bads? Revisiting the Political Economy of Risk' *Sociological Research Online*, 10 (3): http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/3/ mythen.html

Nichols, T. and Beynon, H. (1977) *Living with Capitalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Nisbet, R. A. (1959) 'The Decline and Fall of Social Class' *The Pacific Sociological Review*, 2 (1): 11–17.

Nollmann, G. and Strasser, H. (2007) 'Individualization as an Interpretive Scheme of Inequality: Why Class and Inequality Still Persist' in C. Howard (Ed.) *Contested Individualization: Debates About Contemporary Personhood.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 81–97.

Offe, C. (1985) *Disorganized Capitalism: Contemporary Transformations of Work and Politics.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ostrow, J. M. (1981) 'Culture as a Fundamental Dimension of Experience: A Discussion of Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of the Human Habitus' *Human Studies*, 4 (3): 279–297.

Pahl, R. E. (1989) 'Is the Emperor Naked? Some Questions on the Adequacy of Sociological Theory in Urban and Regional Research' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 13 (4): 707–720.

Pahl, R. E. (1993) 'Does Class Analysis Without Class Theory Have a Promising Future?: A Reply to Goldthorpe and Marshall' *Sociology*, 27 (2): 253–258.

Pakulski, J. and Waters, M. (1996) *The Death of Class*. London: Sage.

Parkin, F. (1979) *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. London: Tavistock.

Payne, G. and Grew, C. (2005) 'Unpacking 'Class Ambivalence': Some Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Accessing Class Cultures' *Sociology*, 39 (5): 893–910.

Payne, G. and Williams, M. (2005) 'Generalization in Qualitative Research' *Sociology*, 39 (2): 295–314.

Payne, G., Williams, M. and Chamberlain, S. (2004) 'Methodological Pluralism in British Sociology' *Sociology*, 38 (1): 153–163.

Peterson, R. A. (1997) 'The Rise and Fall of Highbrow Snobbery as a Status Marker' *Poetics*, 25: 75–92.

Peterson, R. A. and Kern, R. M. (1996) 'Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore' *American Sociological Review*, 61 (5): 900–907.

Philips, T. and Western, M. (2005) 'Social Change and Social Identity: Postmodernity, Reflexive Modernisation and the Transformation of Social Identities in Australia' in F. Devine, M. Savage, J. Scott and R. Crompton (Eds.) *Rethinking Class: Culture, Identities and Lifestyle*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 163–185.

Phillips, D. (1995) 'Correspondence Analysis' *Social Research Update*, 7.

Popper, K. R. (1959/2002) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Routledge.

Porter, S. (2002) 'Critical Realist Ethnography' in T. May (Ed.) *Qualitative Research in Practice*. London: Sage, pp. 53–72.

Potter, G. (2000) 'For Bourdieu, Against Alexander: Reality and Reduction' *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30 (2): 229–246.

Poulantzas, N. (1975) *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*. London: New Left Books.

Poulantzas, N. (1978) *Political Power and Social Classes*. London: Verso.

Reay, D. (1998a) *Class Work: Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Primary Schooling*. London: UCL Press.

Reay, D. (1998b) 'Rethinking Social Class: Qualitative Perspectives on Class and Gender' *Sociology*, 32 (2): 259–275.

Reay, D. (2004) 'It's All Becoming a Habitus: Beyond the Habitual Use of Habitus in Educational Research' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25 (4): 431–444.

Reay, D. (2005) 'Doing the Dirty Work of Social Class? Mother's Work in Support of their Children's Schooling' *The Sociological Review*, 53 (s. 2): 104–115.

Reay, D. and Lucey. H. (2000) '"I Don't Really Like it Here But I Don't Want to be Anywhere Else": Children and Inner City Council Estates' *Antipode*, 32 (4): 410–428.

Reay, D., David, M. E. and Ball, S. (2005) *Degrees of Choice: Social Class, Race and Gender in Higher Education*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Reid, I. (1998) *Class in Britain*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ritzer, G. (1980) *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science* (Revised Ed.). New York: Allyn and Bacon.

Robbins, D. (2002) 'Sociology and Philosophy in the Work of Pierre Bourdieu, 1965–75' *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 2 (3): 299–328.

Roberts, B. (2002) *Biographical Research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Roberts, K. (2001) *Class in Modern Britain*. Basingstoke: Pagrave.

Roberts, K., Clark, S. C. and Wallace, C. (1994) 'Flexibility and Individualisation: A Comparison of Transitions into Employment in England and Germany' *Sociology*, 28 (1): 31–54.

Roemer, J. E. (1982) *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Roker, D. (1993) 'Gaining the Edge: Girls at a Private School' in I. Bates and G. Riseborough (Eds.) *Youth and Inequality*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 122–138.

Ryle, G. (1949) *The Concept of Mind*. London: Hutchinson.

Särlvik, B. and Crewe, I. (1983) *Decade of Dealignment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saunders, P. (1987) *Social Theory and the Urban Question* (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge.

Saunders, P. (1990) *A Nation of Home Owners*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Savage, M. (2000) *Class Analysis and Social Transformation*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Savage, M. (2003) 'A New Class Paradigm?' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24 (4): 535–541.

Savage, M. (2005) 'Working-Class Identities in the 1960s: Revisiting the Affluent Worker Study' *Sociology*, 39 (5): 929–946.

Savage, M. (2006) 'The Musical Field' *Cultural Trends*, 15 (2–3): 159–174.

Savage, M. and Burrows, R. (2007) 'The Coming Crisis of Empirical Sociology' *Sociology*, 41 (5): 885–899.

Savage, M. and Warde, A. (2008) 'Culture, Class and Distinction: Britain in 2003' paper presented at *Putting Pierre Bourdieu to Work IV: A Working Conference*, University of Manchester, 29th May 2008.

Savage, M., Bagnall, G. and Longhurst, B. (2001) 'Ordinary, Ambivalent and Defensive: Class Identities in the Northwest of England' *Sociology*, 35 (4): 875–892.

Savage, M., Bagnall, G. and Longhurst, B. (2005a) 'Local Habitus and Working Class Culture' in F. Devine, M. Savage, J. Scott and R. Crompton (Eds.) *Rethinking Class: Culture, Identities and Lifestyle*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. pp. 95–122.

Savage, M., Bagnall, G. and Longhurst, B. (2005b) *Globalization and Belonging*. London: Sage.

Savage, M., Warde, A. and Devine, F. (2005) 'Capitals, Assets and Resources: Some Critical Issues' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56 (1): 31–47.

Savage, M., Barlow, J., Dickens, P. and Fielding, A. J. (1992) *Property, Bureaucracy and Culture: Middle-Class Formation in Contemporary Britain*. London: Routledge.

Sayer, A. (2002) 'What Are You Worth? Why Class is an Embarrassing Subject' *Sociological Research Online*, 7 (3): http://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/3/sayer.html.

Sayer, A. (2005) *The Moral Significance of Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schutz, A. (1962) *Collected Papers, Volume 1: The Problem of Social Reality*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Schutz, A. (1964) *Collected Papers, Volume 2: Studies in Social Theory*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Schutz, A. (1970a) *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schutz, A. (1970b) *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Schutz, A. (1972) *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Schutz, A. and Luckmann, T. (1973) *The Structures of the Life-World* (vol. 1). London: Heinemann.

Schutz, A. and Luckmann, T. (1989) *The Structures of the Life-World* (vol. 2). Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Scott, J. (1982) *The Upper Class: Property and Privilege in Britain*. London: Macmillan.

Scott, J. (1990) *Who Rules Britain?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Scott, J. (2002) 'Social Class and Stratification in Late Modernity' *Acta Sociologica*, 45 (1): 23–35.

Sennett, R. (1998) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Silva, E. B. (2006) 'Homologies of Social Space and Elective Affinities: Researching Cultural Capital' *Sociology*, 40 (6): 1171–1189.

Skeggs, B. (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender*. London: Sage.

Skeggs, B. (2004) *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge.

Smith, D. (1999) *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Social Trends (2006) No. 36. London: Office of National Statistics.

Social Trends (2007) No. 37. London: Office of National Statistics.

Sørenson, A. B. (2000) 'Toward a Sounder Basis for Class Analysis' *The American Journal of Sociology*, 105 (6): 1523–1558.

Southerton, D. (2002) 'Boundaries of 'Us' and 'Them': Class, Mobility and Identification in a New Town' *Sociology*, 36 (1): 171–193.

Stewart, A., Prandy, K. and Blackburn, R. M. (1980) *Social Stratification and Occupations*. London: Macmillan

Stones, R. (2005) *Structuration Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Surridge, P. (2007) 'Class Belonging: A Quantitative Exploration of Identity and Consciousness' *The British Journal of Sociology*, 58 (2): 207–226.

Swartz, D. (1997) *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sweetman, P. (2003) 'Twenty-First Century Dis-ease? Habitual Reflexivity or the Reflexive Habitus' *The Sociological Review*. 51 (4): 528–549.

Taylor, C. (1989) *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, E. P. (1980) *The Making of the English Working Class* (3rd Ed.). London: Victor Gollancz.

Thompson, J. B. (1989) 'The Theory of Structuration' in D. Held and J. B. Thompson (Eds.) *Social Theory of Modern Societies: Anthony Giddens and His Critics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 56–76.

Thompson, J. B. (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Thrift, N. (1993) 'The Arts of the Living, the Beauty of the Dead: Anxieties of Being in the Work of Anthony Giddens' *Progress in Human Geography*, 17 (1): 111–121.

Throop, C. J. and Murphy, K. M. (2002) 'Bourdieu and Phenomenology: A Critical Assessment' *Anthropological Theory*, 2 (2): 185–207.

Titchen, A. and Hobson, D. (2005) 'Phenomenology' in B. Somekh and C. Lewin (Eds.) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage, pp. 121–130.

Urry, J. (2004) 'Introduction: Thinking Society Anew' in U. Beck and J. Willms, *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 1–10.

Vandenberghe, F. (1999) '"The Real is Relational": An Epistemological Analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's Generative Structuralism' *Sociological Theory*, 17 (1): 32–67.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (1989) 'Social Ontology, Epistemology and Class: On Wright's and Burawoy's Politics of Knowledge' *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 34: 165–186.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (1991) 'Making Class: The Middle Class(es) in Social Theory and Social Structure' in S. G. McNall, R. F. Levine and R. Fantasia (Eds.) *Bringing Class Back In: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 39–64.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (1997) 'For an Analytic of Racial Domination' *Political Power and Social Theory*, 11: 221–234.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (1998) 'Pierre Bourdieu' in R. Stones (Ed.) *Key Sociological Thinkers*. London: Macmillan, pp. 215–229.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (2001) 'Further Notes on Bourdieu's "Marxism"' *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 38 (1): 103–109.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (2004a) 'Decivilizing and Demonizing: The Social and Symbolic Remaking of the Black American Ghetto and Elias in the Dark Ghetto' in S. Loyal and S. Quilley (Eds.) *The Sociology of Norbert Elias*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 95–121.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (2004b) *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (2005a) 'Habitus' in J. Berckert and M. Zafirovski (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of Economic Sociology*. London: Routledge, pp. 315–319.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (2005b) 'Introduction: Symbolic Power and Democratic Practice' in L. J. D. Wacquant (Ed.) *Bourdieu and Democratic Politics: The Mystery of Ministry*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 1–9.

Wacquant, L. J. D. (2008) 'Taking Bourdieu into the Ghetto: Social Theory Meets Urban Outcasts' plenary lecture delivered at *Putting Bourdieu to Work IV: A Working Conference*, University of Manchester, 29th May 2008.

Wagner, H. R. (1973) 'The Scope of Phenomenological Sociology: Considerations and Suggestions' in G. Psathas (Ed.) *Phenomenological Sociology: Issues and Applications*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 61–90.

Walkerdine, V. and Lucey, H. (1989) *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socialising Daughters*. London: Virago.

Walkerdine, V, Lucey, H. and Melody, J. (1999) *Growing Up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Warde, A. (1994) 'Consumption, Identity-Formation and Uncertainty' *Sociology*, 28 (4): 877–898.

Weininger, E. B. (2005) 'Foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's Class Analysis' in E. O. Wright (Ed.) *Approaches to Class Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 82–118.

Westergaard, J. (1992) 'About and Beyond the 'Underclass': Some Notes on Influences of Social Climate on British Sociology Today' *Sociology*, 26 (4): 575–587.

Williams, M. (2000) 'Interpretivism and Generalization' *Sociology*, 34 (2): 209–224.

Williams, M. (2002) 'Generalization in Interpretive Research' in T. May (Ed.) *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage, pp. 125–143.

Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House.

Willmott, H. C. (1986) 'Unconscious Sources of Motivation in the Theory of the Subject: An Exploration and Critique of Giddens' Dualistic Models of Action and Personality' *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 16 (1): 105–121.

Wittgenstein, L. (1952) *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wolff, K. (1979) 'Phenomenology and Sociology' in T. Bottomore and R. Nisbet (Eds.) *A History of Sociological Analysis*. London: Heinemann, pp. 499–556.

Wood, E. M. (1986) *The Retreat From Class: A New 'True' Socialism*. London: Verso.

Wright, E. O. (1978) *Class, Crisis and the State*. London: New Left Books.

Wright, E. O. (1979) *Class Structure and Income Determination*. New York: Academic Press.

Wright, E. O. (1985) *Classes*. London: Verso.

Wright, E. O. (1997) *Class Counts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, E. O. (Ed.) (2005a) *Approaches to Class Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, E. O. (2005b) 'Foundations of a Neo-Marxist Class Analysis' in E. O. Wright (Ed.) *Approaches to Class Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 4–30.

Wright, E. O. *et al.* (1989) *The Debate on Classes*. London: Verso.

Zweig, F. (1961) *The Worker in an Affluent Society: Family Life and Industry*. London: Heinemann.